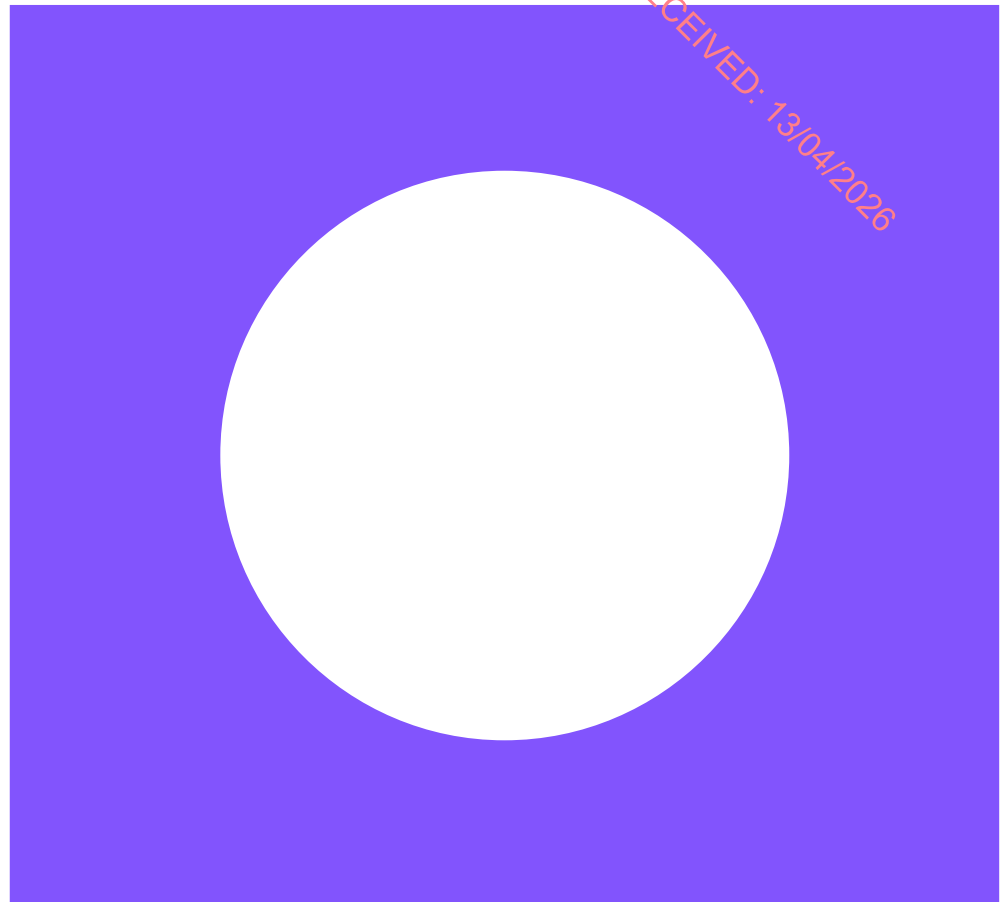


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# **Shelburne Energy Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Report**

Chapter 2 Stakeholder Development

April 2026

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# Shelburne Energy Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Report

## Chapter 2 Stakeholder Development

April 2026

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## 2 Stakeholder Engagement

### 2.1 Introduction

Public participation and pre-application engagement with the local community has been an integral to the development of the Proposed Project and the EIA process. This chapter details the statutory and non-statutory stakeholder engagement activities undertaken for the Proposed Project.

### 2.2 Non-statutory stakeholder engagement

The Applicant conducted a series of consultations with landowners and community engagement events to collate the views and opinions of the local community.

#### 2.2.1 Consultation with Landowners

Consultation with landowners took place between July 2023 and May 2025, following completion of a feasibility study for the proposed solar farm. This process included landowners located to the north, south, east, and west of the Applicant's lands.

Agreements were reached with six landowners, who consented to their lands being included as part of the project. Securing legal consent from landowners is a requirement of the planning process with Wexford County Council, both at pre-application and application stages. Letters of consent from all relevant landowners were submitted as part of the planning application.

#### 2.2.2 Local Community Engagement

The Applicant has been committed to engaging with the local community and the valuable contribution that this can bring to the design process. The Applicant's objectives have been to inform and engage with the communities that immediately surround the development site.

The objectives of the Applicant were to:

Ensure that those residents that will be most affected by the proposal (those whose properties immediately adjoin the Site) were aware of the proposals at the earliest opportunity;

Allow the local community to meet the Applicant on a one-to-one basis and fully understand the proposals to inform any comments they may have; and

Allow the Applicant to address any concerns raised by the local community and have the opportunity to address them before the planning application was submitted.

##### 2.2.2.1 Notification to Local Community

The project information leaflet (contained in Appendix 2.1) included the following information;

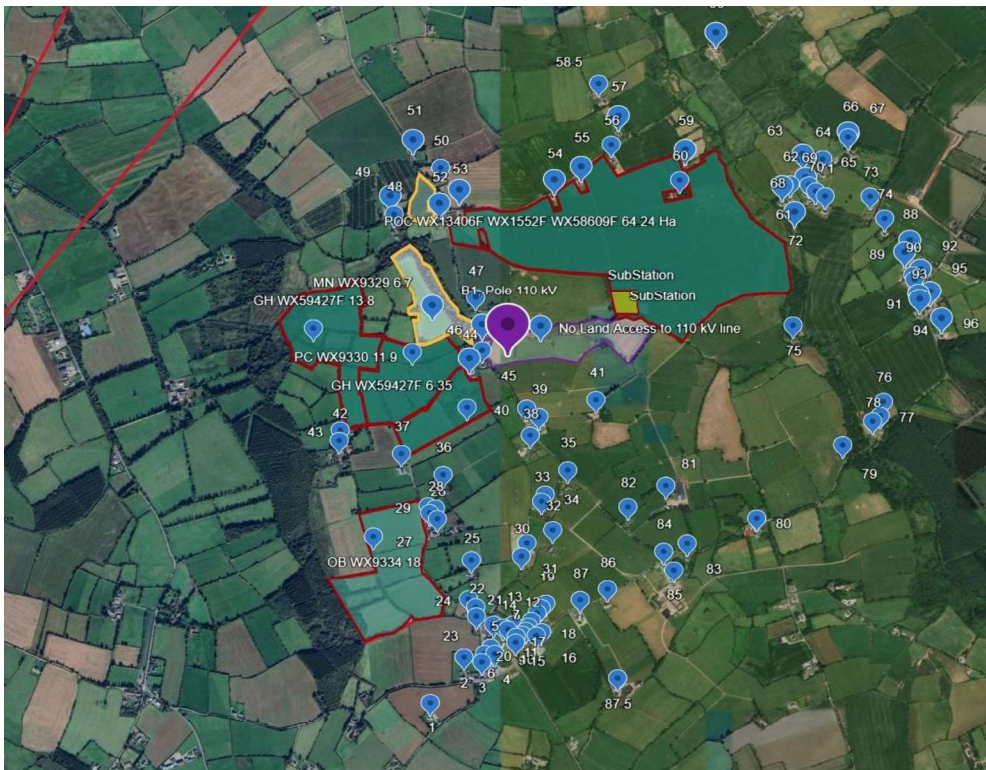
- Project Overview
- Location Map / Site Layout Map
- Outline description of the Proposed Development
- Outline of the next steps (planning consent)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Details of in-person meetings

- Project contact details

A mapping exercise was undertaken to define a catchment area of residents most likely to be affected by the proposed development. Properties located to the south, east, and west were identified as having the greatest potential impact. Properties to the north were generally excluded due to their orientation relative to the solar farm, with the exception of those immediately adjacent to the site.

Engagement with the identified community within Figure 2.1 commenced in June 2025 through the issuing of notification letters to households considered most affected due to topography and orientation.

**Figure 2.1: A map displaying the properties identified as likely to be effected by the proposed development.**



A total of 97 households were contacted, with additional follow-up actions including further issuing of letters and hand delivery where required.

The correspondence included a cover letter from Gen7 and a Project Information leaflet outlining the proposed development and the broader project context. The leaflet also invited recipients to attend in-person consultation meetings with the Applicant and members of the planning team, held on 16–17 and 24–25 July 2025.

#### 2.2.2.2 Non-Statutory Public Consultation Event

In-person meetings were held on 16th July and 24th/ 25th July 2025 at The Brandon Court Hotel, New Ross for members of the local community who accepted the invite for discussion with the applicant and members of the planning team. Time slots of a 30-minute duration were made available to individuals to discuss the project with the Gen7 team. Of the 97 individuals written to 18 households accepted invitations to attend these meetings.

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### 2.2.2.3 Community Engagement Issues Raised

Concerns and issues were raised throughout the engagement with the local community. These include concerns over distance between the solar panels and local homes, views being obstructed, and glint and glare from the panels shining into homes, and what sort of screening would be provided. The height and nature of fencing, as well as security lights/cameras, issues were raised. The location and any noise generated by the BESS was a concern for local residents. Road disruption during construction was repeatedly raised, as well as safety issues surrounding the narrow roads, pedestrians, cyclists and the heavy construction traffic. Of particular concern was road safety surrounding the local school. Some individuals were worried about potential radiation emitted by the solar panels/BESS. There were also concerns over fire risks at the BESS site.

Concerns were repeatedly raised that the presence of a solar farm could reduce property values and discourage people from returning to the area in the future. A key issue for the community was the use of productive agricultural land for solar panels, limiting land available for farming. There were also concerns about site access, with many residents opposed to access points being located near their properties.

Ecological and wildlife protection issues were important for many participants. Concerns over loss of biodiversity with hedgerows being disturbed were raised. Some residents wanted to know if herbicide/pesticide would be used in the fields and whether harmful chemicals would be used when cleaning the panels. There was a worry that the solar panels would be sitting in fallow fields and therefore the detritus from those fields would blow over onto agricultural land. There were questions over who would graze sheep on the development site. Future use of the land, past the 40 year project time span was a concern, whether it would revert back to agricultural use.

Some participants expressed support for solar energy over wind energy but questioned the suitability of the lands for solar and BESS, others were interested in the community benefit fund, and wanted to know how it would be distributed within the local community.

A Community Benefit Fund was discussed at the meetings whereby it was outlined that the applicants intention is that the Grid Connection will be part of a Renewable Energy Subsidy Scheme (RESS), and as part of the RESS a Solar Community Benefit Fund (CBF) would be set up —investing €2 for every MWh of electricity that is sold to the grid.

The meeting Attendees who were interested in further details on the project were invited to provide their contact information to allow the design team to answer specific queries, inform them of the lodgement of the planning application and details of the EIAR portal.

### 2.2.2.4 Follow-up Engagement with Adjacent Neighbours

Sixteen individual householders whose properties directly adjoin the proposed solar farm were invited to attend separate on-site meetings at their homes to discuss matters of specific concern. Fourteen residents elected to meet the project design team (comprising the Applicant, landscape architect, and planning consultant) to explore potential mitigation measures for inclusion in the application. Discussions primarily focused on additional mitigation planting and location of solar panels relative to property boundaries, location of security fencing and lighting together and construction-phase disturbance including impacts on the local roads.

For these meetings sixteen tailored planning packs were prepared for each property and left with the individual householders. These illustrated key details such as distances to solar panels, proposed planting, and layout adjustments, incorporating site-specific concerns. Mitigation measures included additional screen planting and increased setbacks from property boundaries.

Further iterative engagement took place with five households through multiple follow-up meetings, allowing for refinement of mitigation proposals and addressing outstanding concerns in more detail. Discussions primarily focused on additional mitigation planting and location of solar panels relative to property boundaries.

## 2.3 Statutory Bodies

Consultation on the Proposed Project with certain prescribed bodies was undertaken.

### 2.3.1 Development Applications Unit

A letter was emailed to the Development Applications Unit within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on 10 June 2025. A response was received on 01 July 2025. Archaeology related observations were provided in their responses, and are summarised herein:

- Notes existing Recorded Monuments with proximity to the Project site.
- There is potential for previously unidentified archaeological sites/features to survive within this greenfield development area and a fully comprehensive archaeological impact assessment, based on a programme of fieldwork, is recommended to develop an informed archaeological mitigation strategy to ensure the protection of the archaeological heritage.
- The developer should engage the services of a suitably qualified archaeologist to carry out a documentary and field-based archaeological assessment of the development site.
- The archaeologist shall prepare a written report, including an archaeological impact statement, for inclusion in the EIAR.
- The Planning Authority, in consultation with this Department, will advise accordingly following review of the archaeological assessment report.

The above items are addressed in Chapter 13 Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage.

### 2.3.2 Inland Fisheries Ireland

A letter was emailed to the relevant regional branch of Inland Fisheries Ireland (regional office for the Proposed Project is Clonmel, which covers the South Eastern river basin district) on 10 June 2025. No response was received.

### 2.3.3 EirGrid

As part of the Proposed Project a GIS/AIS substation compound is required to connect the solar farm/BESS to the national grid. The ownership and operation of the GIS substation will be transferred to EirGrid once commissioned, as such, a discussion was held with EirGrid on 21 March 2023 to discuss the proposed grid connection. During this discussion EirGrid informed the Applicant that there was no capacity on the 110kV electricity transmission system to cater for additional generation (from any generation source). EirGrid thereby advised that the Proposed Project will be required to provide a connection into the local 220kV transmission system.

A pre-application grid connection application was lodged with EirGrid on 15 June 2025. Discussions with EirGrid will recommence subsequent to the lodgement of the Grid Application for the grid connection.

## 2.4 Statutory Engagement

Pre-application planning consultations have been undertaken for the Proposed Project including the grid connection which is required to connect the Proposed Project to the national grid.

## 2.4.1 Wexford County Council

A pre-application meeting request to discuss the proposed solar farm was sent on 30 August 2024 to Wexford County Council and a pre-application meeting was held on 12 November 2024 (Pre-application reference: P20240256). It was noted that solar farms are not a type of project listed within the EIA Directive, as such, the planning application would be accompanied by a Planning and Environmental Considerations Report. The following issues were discussed during the pre-application meeting:

- Traffic: requirement for a traffic impact assessment. This has been provided in Chapter 14 Roads, Traffic and Transportation.
- Air: requirement for a construction phase dust plan. This has been provided in Chapter 10 Air Quality.
- Noise: baseline noise survey to accompany the application. A baseline noise survey has been undertaken and is included in Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration.
- Water: construction surface water management to be provided, operational phase drainage to include SuDS based design. The proposed drainage is described in Chapter 5 - Description of Development.
- Biodiversity: Any site fencing must provide access for mammals. Clarification must be provided on why native habitats within the site are not suitable for tree planting and are worth retaining. The proposed perimeter fencing will include mammal passes in each section, while an area of land (measuring approximately 2.31 hectares) has been identified as appropriate for oak and alder tree planting. Justification on the retention of other habitats is discussed with Chapter 5 and 7.
- Agricultural uses: state intention to retain agricultural uses. It is proposed that sheep grazing is utilised throughout the solar farm to manage grass vegetation growth and eliminate or reduce the need for mechanical machinery to undertake this maintenance activity.
- Fire officer noted that the need to address the fire-fighting management approach as fires will not be attended. The proposed fire protection measures are addressed in Chapter 5 Description of Development.
- Battery Storage if being considered there would be a need to ensure that no leakage would enter ground water. The potential effects of the Proposed Project on groundwater are described in Chapter 8 Land, Soils and Hydrogeology.
- The planning authority advised that non statutory local community engagement should be considered. Community engagement as undertaken in described in section 2.2.1.

Following this pre-application planning consultation the Applicant sought to include Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) as part of the overall project. Wexford County Council were informed of this change to the Proposed Project to include BESS via email on 03 July 2025. Additionally, it was communicated in the pre-application consultation request documents submitted on 03 July 2025 that the relevant threshold of 5 hectares has been exceeded in relation to recontouring of a rural landholding under Schedule 5, Part 2, Paragraph 1(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), and therefore a mandatory EIA is triggered.

A second pre-application meeting was proposed by the Applicant if it was deemed to be required by Wexford County Council. A second meeting was held on 16 September 2025 in relation to the amended project description to include BESS. Discussions included the application of S.I. No. 274/2025 - European Union (Planning and Development) (Renewable Energy) Regulations 2025 in relation to the lodging of the Section 34 planning application.

## 2.4.2 An Coimisiún Pleanála

As outlined in Chapter 1, Shelburne Energy Farm will require a grid connection to the 220kV electricity transmission network. As such, the grid connection element of the Proposed Project is considered to comprise Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) pursuant to Section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as such a determination on the SID status of this grid connection was sought (request dated 16 May 2025) and a pre-application meeting was held with An Coimisiún Pleanála on 31 July 2025.

A formal decision on the SID pre-application process will only be issued when the pre-application process is formally closed, which at the time of writing has not yet occurred. As part of the SID closure process, An Coimisiún Pleanála will provide a list of prescribed bodies who will be required to be notified of a SID application.

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