



Orsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited

Planning Report

Proposed Oatfield Wind Farm, Co. Clare

(ABP SID Reference No. ABP 315239-22)

604569

DECEMBER 2023



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1 INTRODUCTION

This Planning Report has been prepared by Nicholas O’Dwyer Ltd. on behalf of Orsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited (hereafter referred to as Orsted) in respect of a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) Application for planning permission to An Bord Pleanála under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The application is for a 10-year duration planning permission and a 35-year operational life from the date of the commissioning of the entire wind farm.

The townlands, in which the Proposed Development for which a 10-year planning permission is sought, are located in Co. Clare are listed in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Townlands and Electoral Districts (EDs) in which the proposed Wind Farm Project is located

Proposed development	Townlands
Wind energy project inclusive of 11 no. turbines, site access tracks, 110kV onsite substation, and construction compound, IPP cabling	Belvoir, Cloghera, Cloonsheerea, Cloontra, Cloontra East, Cloontra West, Crag, Derrynaveagh, Derryvinnaan, Drumsillagh or Sallybank (Merritt), Drumsillagh or Sallybank (Parker), Gortacullin, Knockshanvo, Kyle, Mountrice, Oatfield and Snaty (Massy), Co. Clare.
Grid connection route from wind farm site (Western DA) to 110 kV loop-in at existing overhead line/grid	Ballycar North, Co. Clare.
Turbine Delivery Route – Temporary Accommodating Works	Knockbrack Lower, Co. Clare.

The planning application for a 10-year duration planning permission is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). In addition, the application includes a Species & Habitat Management Plan (S&HMP) and proposed Community Benefit Fund over the 35-years of the proposed life-time of the scheme.

Additionally, it includes the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind energy development consisting of 11 no. wind turbine generators with foundations and crane pad hardstanding areas; a permanent meteorological mast (100m); a new on-site 110 kV substation, underground IPP 33kV cabling connecting the Eastern Development Area (EDA) to the Western Development Area (WDA); a grid connection route (GCR) to the national grid at Ballycar North, and temporary accommodating works required for transporting turbine components to the wind farm in Co. Clare.

Additionally, it includes all associated site works & site clearance, temporary compounds and storage areas; upgrade of existing site tracks and construction of new site tracks; site drainage including a SuDS; ancillary works including gates and fencing, lighting and signage; and biodiversity mitigations and enhancements, including hedgerow planting.

The total Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of the wind farm is between 52.8MW and 66MW. The exact MEC will be dependent on the output power of the wind turbine models available at procurement stage, which will fall within this range.

The proposed turbines will have a tip height range from 176.5m to 180m, a hub height range from 105 to 110m and a rotor diameter range from 133m to 150m.

The exact make and model of the wind turbine will be dictated by a competitive tender process, and it will be within the range shown on the plans and particulars and as described and assessed in this Planning Application.

Of the four turbine delivery route (TDR) options originally examined for feasibility, (as shown in **EIAR Volume II, Chapter 1 Introduction**) only one route from Foynes Port in Co. Limerick to the site is included in the application for planning permission and specifically only the parts that require temporary accommodating works for abnormal loads. Of the three grid connection route (GCR) options examined (as shown in **EIAR Volume II, Chapter 1 Introduction**), only one route is included in the application for planning permission – to link/loop into the existing grid connection at Ballycar North.

The site layout plan of the proposed development for which planning permission is sought is shown in **EIAR Volume II, Chapter 1 Introduction**.

Further details of the Proposed Development, including the construction programme and sequencing of works, as assessed in the accompanying EIAR, are provided in **Volume II, Part 1, Chapter 5 Project Description**.

1.1 Project Background and Need for the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is a direct response to key policies and increasing targets, which have been put in place at local, national, regional and EU/international levels in relation to renewable energy and climate change. In addition, the EC recently announced/published an accelerating EU Wind Energy Package in October 2023 on foot of the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. As noted above, the proposed development comprises a wind farm development, grid connection and turbine delivery route (TDR), which will enable a total Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of between 58.2-66MW to provide additional and much-needed energy to the national grid. The Proposed Development will provide additional renewable energy to aid in offsetting the use of fossil fuels, within the electricity generating sector and will contribute to Ireland's overall renewable energy and climate change targets.

As is clearly demonstrated as part of this planning submission, the proposed development complies with, and is supported by, the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) 2023-2029 & the Clare Wind Energy Strategy (WES) 2023-2029, which all recognise the County Clare's abundant potential to absorb additional wind energy developments and to make a significant contribution to national renewable energy targets, in accordance with EU Policy.

1.2 Pre-Planning Meeting with An Bord Pleanála

A pre-planning meeting took place in relation to the proposed wind farm development as part of the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) screening process on 23rd February 2023 and the Proposed Development was confirmed as a SID Application by An Bord Pleanála on the 10th

October 2023 (Case Reference Number ABP-315239-22). The matters raised in the pre-application consultations have been addressed throughout this planning application and have also framed and guided the formulation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

1.3 Pre-Planning Consultation with Clare County Council

In addition, a pre-application consultation took place with Clare County Council on the 5th October 2023 in relation to the proposed development. The matters raised in the pre-planning consultations have been addressed in this planning application and in addition have framed and guided the formulation of the Oatfield Wind Farm Community Report (December 2023), which is attached as **Appendix 1**.

1.4 The Planning Application

The planning application is presented in four Parts and contains the requisite forms, statutory notices, and the supporting documentation and planning drawings listed below.

Part 1 includes the Planning Application Documents:

- Section 1 Cover Letter, Pre-App with ABP & confirmation of SID from ABP
- Section 2 Landowner Consent Letters
- Section 3 Confirmation of Receipt of Notification to EIA Portal
- Section 4 Planning Fee
- Section 5 Planning Application Form – ABP SID
- Section 6 Planning Fee Calculation
- Section 7 Newspaper Notices (Local and National)
- Section 8 Planning Report & Community Report
- Section 9 Letters to Prescribed Bodies
- USB Submissions

Part 2 includes all Planning Drawings (A1 drawings)

Part 3 EIAR

- Volume I Non-Technical Summary
- Volume II Main Report
 - *Part 1 The Project Context and Description*
 - Chapter 1 Introduction
 - Chapter 2 EIAR Methodology
 - Chapter 3 EIAR Scoping
 - Chapter 4 Project Need and Alternatives Considered
 - Chapter 5 Project Description

- *Part 2 Environmental Factors*
 - Chapter 6 Population and Human Health
 - Chapter 7 Biodiversity
 - Chapter 8 Ornithology (Birds)
 - Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology
 - Chapter 10 Land, Soils and Geology
 - Chapter 11 Material Assets
 - Chapter 12 Shadow Flicker
 - Chapter 13 Noise and Vibration
 - Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual
 - Chapter 15 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
 - Chapter 16 Traffic and Transport
 - Chapter 17 Air Quality
 - Chapter 18 Climate
 - Chapter 19 Major Accidents and Disasters
 - Chapter 20 Impact Interactions & Cumulative Effects
 - Chapter 21 Schedule of Mitigation Measures
- Volume III Appendices
- Volume IV Photomontages

Part 4 Appropriate Assessment Reporting

2 SITE ASSESSMENT

2.1 Site Location & Description

The Proposed Development is located in the Oatfield and Gortacullin areas of East Clare. The site is approximately 1.3 km to the South of Broadford, 4.7 km to the East of Sixmilebridge, 7.6 km North of Ardnacrusha, 9.2 km North of Limerick, and 19.7 km South of Ennis. The wind farm is split into two distinct areas, referred to as the Western Development Area (WDA) and the Eastern Development Area (EDA).

The wind farm site is located within an upland area setting dominated by commercial coniferous plantation and farming, blanket bog, wet heath and rough/wet grassland. The area in which the turbines will be located ranges in elevation from 258.05m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the west to 222.90m AOD in the east. The settlement pattern in the wider vicinity of the wind farm site is characterised by dispersed one-off dwellings and farm buildings located mainly along the public roads, with some dwellings (older and newer) located down long private lanes/boreens. In some cases, newer dwellings have been built closer to the road, whilst the older dwelling remains at the end of the lane, and apparently have been subsumed into the farmyard, being surrounded by sheds. The few commercial properties in the study area comprise on-farm

An Independent Power Producer (IPP) connection route of 33kV will be required to connect the EDA to the new on-site 110kV substation, which is located in the WDA. The IPP cables will be installed within the body of the local public road network for approximately 10.6km. Oatfield wind farm includes a proposed grid connection comprising works primarily within and alongside public roads to install underground cabling of approximately 4.3km to connect the wind farm to the National Grid at the proposed 110 kV loop-in located at Ballycar North. The location of the proposed wind farm site and the route of the proposed grid connection route (GCR) and underground cables, for which planning permission is sought, is set out in **Figure 2-1** below.

The temporary works for transporting turbine components to the wind farm site are *via* a preferred option route from Foynes Port in Co. Limerick. The temporary accommodating works will be within and adjacent to local roads only, primarily within the townland of Knockbrack Lower (R471) requiring temporary removal of street furniture, creation of temporary surfaces in road verges, and clearance and trimming back of vegetation, which will be reinstated following delivery.

2.2 Land Ownership

Letters of consent from the landowners within the red line boundary are provided in the planning application documentation (refer to **Part 1, Section 2** of the Planning Documentation).

2.3 Site & Surrounds Planning History

Live and recently approved planning applications were reviewed on the online planning records of Clare County and it was found that there have not been any applications to date made on the subject site, and there are no planning applications of relevance within the surrounding area. We note there was a refusal on 3rd July 2023 to grant outline planning permission (P.A. Reg. Ref. 23/04900) for the development of land approximately 250m from the wind farm site for the



construction of a dwelling house, private on-site waste-water treatment system and associated works.

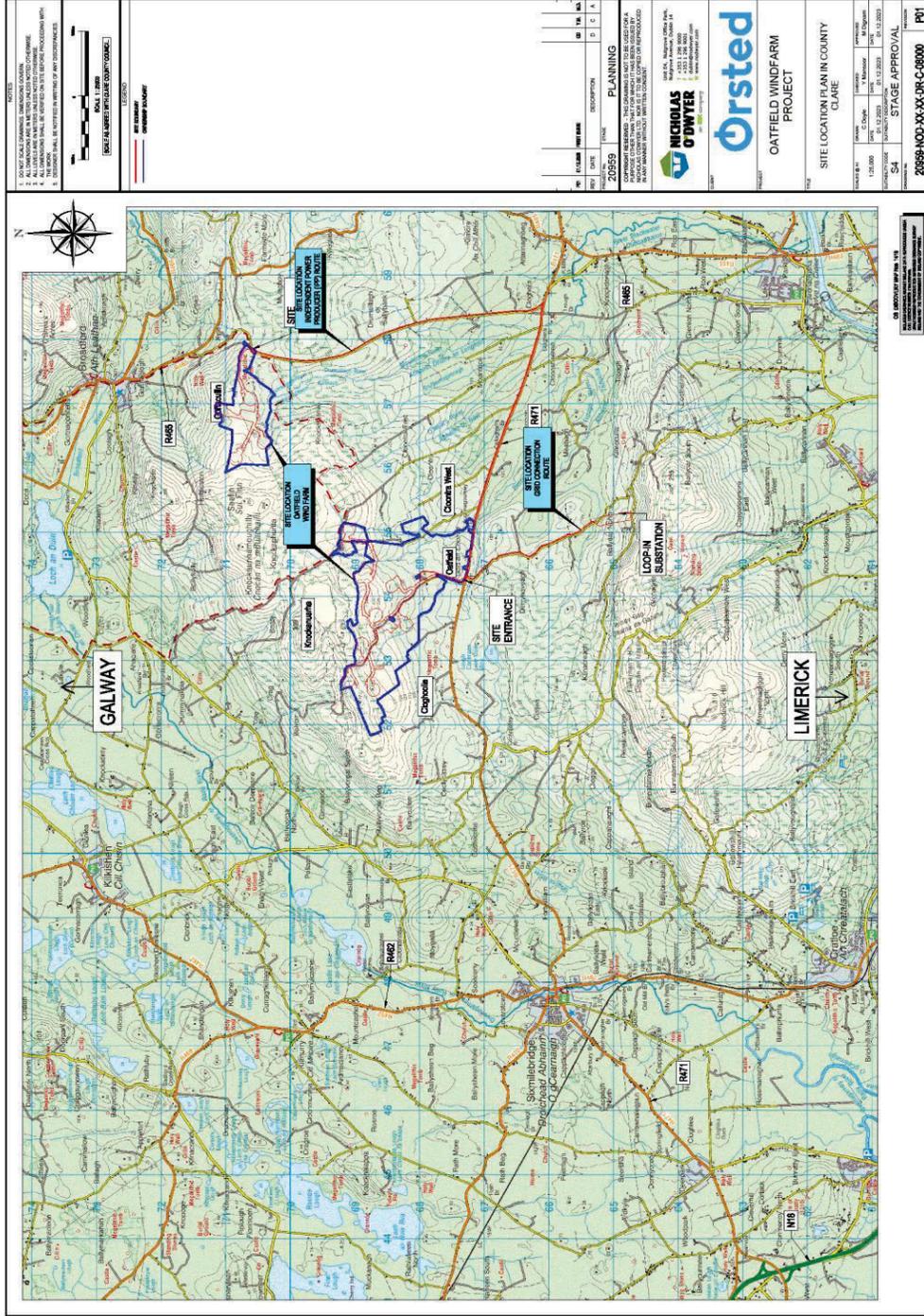


Figure 2-1: Site Location Plan

3 PROPOSED WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Description of the Proposed Wind Farm Development

The proposed Oatfield Wind Farm in Co. Clare consists of the following elements:

- 11 no. three-blade wind turbines with an overall ground to blade tip height range of 176.5m to 180m, a rotor diameter range of 133m to 150m and a hub height range of 105m to 110m;
- Construction of associated reinforced concrete foundations, crane pad hard-standing areas and associated plant/switching gear;
- Construction of new permanent, internal site tracks and upgrading of existing tracks and associated drainage infrastructure including a clear-span bridge (circa 10m length), concrete culverts and the installation of an on-site Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS);
- 2 no. temporary spoil storage areas: one in the western development area and one in the eastern development area;
- Erection of 1 no. permanent meteorological mast in the western development area with a height of 100 m above existing ground level;
- All associated internal, underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to an on-site substation located in the western development area;
- Provision of underground interconnecting 33kV IPP cabling and underground cable joint bays circa. every 750-1,000m for circa. 10.4km (joining eastern and western development areas) within the public road network including the R471;
- Provision of 1 no. 110kV onsite substation and parking in the western development area (Townland of Oatfield), along with associated control and switchgear building, associated electrical plant and equipment, associated security fencing, external lighting and lightning protection, security cameras and all associated infrastructure;
- All works associated with the connection of the wind farm to the national electricity grid, which will be via a loop-in 110kV underground cable connection (circa. 4.3km cable length and joint bays circa. every 750m), to the existing 110kV overhead line in the townland of Ballycar North, with 2 no. new 16m steel lattice end masts & associated overhead line electrical infrastructure, located at the interface with the existing 110kV overhead line;
- 2 nos. temporary construction compounds, including offices/meeting rooms, parking and transformer;
- 10 no. individual site access points and tracks to turbines, on-site sub-station, met mast, temporary spoil storage & temporary construction compound areas from the local road network/public trackway running north of the R471;
- Forest & tree felling to facilitate construction and operation of the proposed development;
- Temporary works to accommodate turbine delivery route (TDR) in the townland of Knockbrack Lower;

- All associated site development works including Construction, Operation and Decommissioning stage site-lighting, fencing and signage.

Of the two grid connection route options examined in the EIAR (as displayed in **Figure 3-1** below), only Option 1 is included in the application for planning permission, i.e. for temporary accommodating works. The site layout plan of the proposed development for which planning permission is sought is shown in **Figure 3-2** below. Further details of the proposed wind farm, the construction programme and sequencing of works is provided in Chapter 5 of the EIAR (**Part 3, Volume II** of the Planning Documentation)

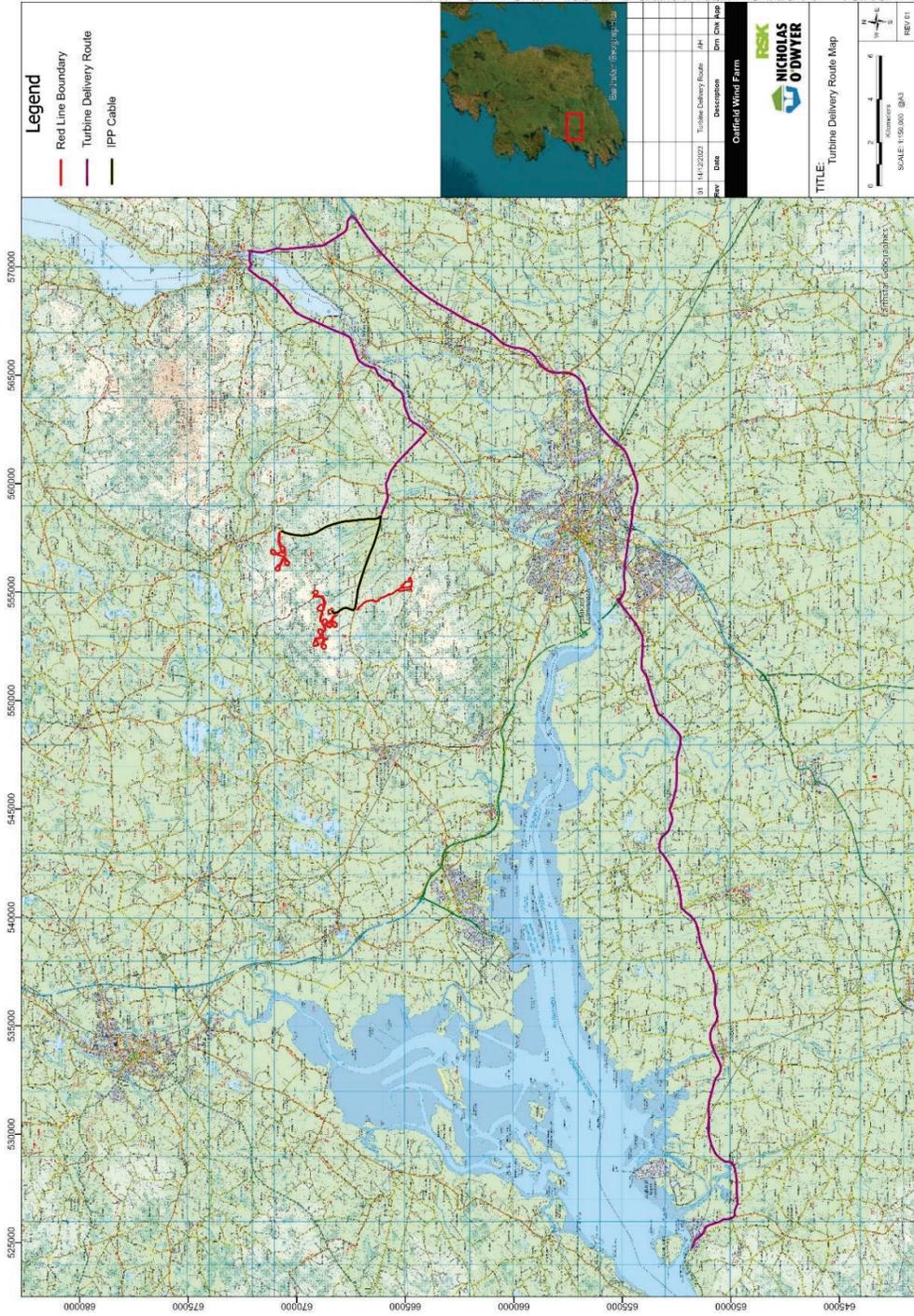


Figure 3-1: Turbine Delivery Route (TDR) – Overall Layout Plan

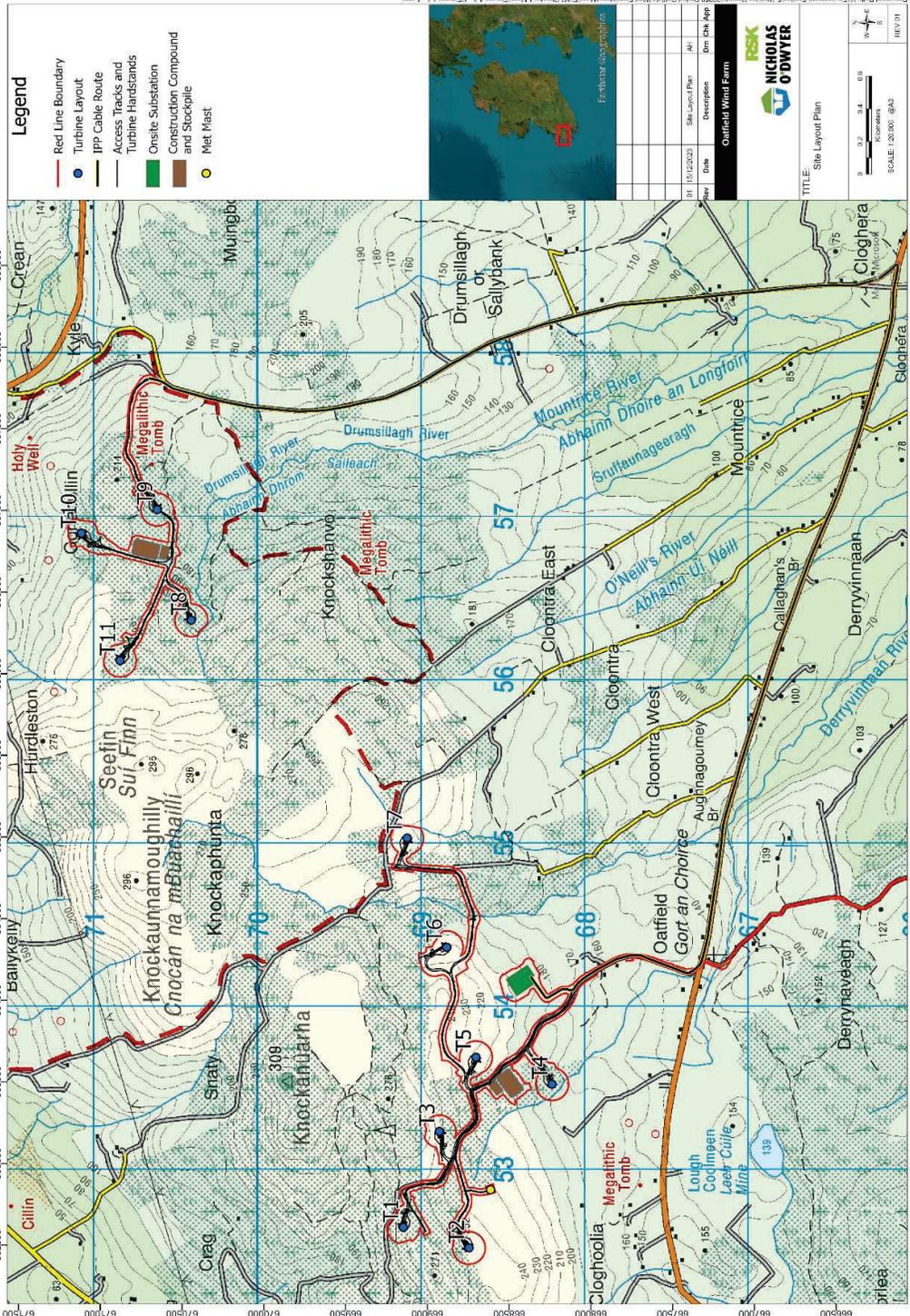


Figure 3-2: Proposed Site Layout Plan

3.2 Wind Turbine Details

The proposed wind turbine envelope used for the environmental assessments has the following specifications:

- Three bladed, horizontal axis type;
- Height of 176.5-180 m from the top of the foundation to blade tip height;
- Rotor diameter of 133-150 m;
- Hub height of 105-110 m; and
- Power rating of 4.8-6.0 MW per turbine, (i.e. between 52.8-66MW)

Following a grant of planning permission, certain details of the wind turbines will be determined at detailed design stage, and subject to a competitive tender, will be decided by the turbine manufacturer on award of the contract. The turbine selected for the project will not exceed the maximum height assessed in the EIAR and NIS and specified in the planning application.

3.3 Wind Turbine Locations

The indicative Grid Reference coordinates of the proposed wind turbine locations are listed in **Table 3-1** below. The final ground level of the turbine foundations will be determined by the actual ground conditions at each proposed turbine location and may differ slightly from those levels. Also, in accordance with the ‘Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG), 2006), micro-siting of the turbine positions may be required within the criteria set out in the guidelines.

Table 3-1: Oatfield, Proposed Wind Turbine Indicative Locations

Turbine ID	ITM Co-ordinates (m OD)		Elevation of top of foundation (m OD)
	Easting	Northing	
T1	552609	669147	258.05
T2	552483	668745	249.65
T3	553196	668926	242.20
T4	553486	668237	181.05
T5	553650	668703	218.65
T6	554325	668881	209.80
T7	554992	669124	233.80
T8	556327	670443	193.55
T9	557004	670652	193.65
T10	556861	671116	189.25
T11	556080	670879	222.90

3.4 Operation of the Proposed Wind Energy Project

During the operation stage, the wind turbines will operate automatically, responding by means of anemometry equipment and control systems to changes in wind speed and direction. The wind turbines will be connected *via* electrical and communications cables, and data will be relayed from the wind turbines to an off-site control centre which will operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The off-site control centre will monitor turbine output, performance, wind speeds, and will respond to any key alarms and warning systems.

As noted above, the Orsted, Oatfield Wind Farm in East Clare is expected to have a lifespan of approximately 35 years. Planning permission is sought for a 35-year operation period commencing from the date of commissioning of the wind turbines.

3.4.1 Maintenance

The turbines will be subject to a routine maintenance programme involving a number of checks and changing of consumables, including oil changes. In addition, there will be a requirement for unscheduled maintenance, which could include resetting alarms, to major component changes requiring a crane. Typically, maintenance traffic will consist of four-wheel drive vehicles or vans. The electricity substation components and site tracks will also require periodic maintenance.

3.4.2 Monitoring

The CEMP sets out a programme of monitoring required for the operational phase of the renewable wind energy project. The CEMP should be consulted for detailed information on the monitoring requirements during the operational phase. A brief summary of the key information is provided below:

- Post-construction bird monitoring, which includes breeding bird surveys, winter roost surveys and corpse searching on the site to determine the level of fatalities for the site, as a result of collisions with the installed turbines. These surveys will be completed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH, 2009);
- Post-construction bat monitoring will be undertaken for at least three years' post construction of the renewable energy development. The monitoring will also include corpse searching in the areas surrounding the turbines to gather data on any actual collisions;
- For most habitat management prescriptions, detail of monitoring proposals can be found in the Species & Habitat Management Plan (**Part 3, Volume III, Appendix 7.3** of the Planning Documentation).
- Post-commissioning noise monitoring will be undertaken.

3.5 Decommissioning of the Proposed Wind Energy Project

The proposed turbines will have a design lifetime of approximately 35 years. In certain circumstances, the operator may wish to replace turbines prior to the end of the design lifetime. Such a decision would be made following assessment by the operator and turbine supplier, in consultation with the local authority, i.e. Clare County Council.

In the decommissioning phase, cranes will be used to disassemble each turbine section and they will be removed from the wind farm site. The upper sections of the foundations projecting above

ground will be removed, and the remainder of the foundations will be covered by soils typical of the surrounding environment and then reseeded or left to re-vegetate according to ecological requirements. Leaving the turbine foundations *in situ* is considered a more environmentally sensible option, as to remove the reinforced concrete associated with each turbine would result in environmental nuisances such as noise and vibration and dust. Underground cables will be cut back at the turbine termination points and will be recycled. It is proposed that site access tracks will remain to allow access through the site for farm access, as considered appropriate at the time. Decommissioning the proposed development will take approximately two months to complete.

Site materials will be recycled, where practicable, or disposed of in accordance with current waste legislation and best practice guidelines at the time of decommissioning.

As with construction, decommissioning works could result in potential significant effects on identified sensitive receptors. Decommissioning has been considered in the CEMP (**Part 3, Volume III, Appendix 5.1** of the Planning Documentation). Details of decommissioning will be agreed with the local authority prior to any decommissioning taking place. The potential for effects during the decommissioning phase of the proposed renewable energy development has been fully assessed in the EIAR.

3.5.1 Use of the Site/Land following Development and Decommissioning

The land on which the wind turbines will be located is an upland area dominated by commercial forestry and farming, blanket bog and rough/wet grassland. Following development, the hardstands and crane pads will be grassed over, and the upgraded and new internal access tracks will be utilised to access farmlands and to provide walking trails for tourists.

Provision has been made in the design of the internal access tracks for replacement of turbine components in the event it is required. The project team has identified areas of high biodiversity, and areas for mitigation and enhancement, which have been agreed with the landowners. It is envisaged that the land will continue to be used for forestry and farming throughout the lifetime of the proposed Project, including following decommissioning.

4 INTERNATIONAL/GLOBAL, EU/EC & NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Proposed Development, which is located in east Co. Clare, has been designed in accordance with the rapidly-accelerating climate change, renewable energy and sustainable development policy framework operating at an international/global, European and national level. The following conventions, protocols, goals/targets, plans and policies are reviewed in detail below, including:

- **International/Global Policies:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992), Kyoto Protocol 1997 and Paris Agreement (2015), and United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs, 2015) & Ireland's Voluntary National Review for the United National General Assembly (UNGA78) (VNR, July and September 2023)
- **European Union/European Commission Renewable Energy and Climate Change Policies:** Europe's Green Deal (2019), REPowerEU (2022 and update March 2023) European Wind Power Action Plan (October 2023)
- **National Plans and Polices:** Ireland's 2nd National Implementation Plan (NIP) for SDGs 2022-2024, published in October 2022, Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP2023), National Planning Framework (NPF, 2018) & 1st Revision (ongoing), and National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030

4.1 International/Global Policies

4.1.1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one of three international environmental treaties negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The other Rio Conventions are the Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The UN Framework on Climate Change's ultimate objective is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system in a time, which allows ecosystems to adapt naturally and enables sustainable development (United Nations, 2023).

The UNFCCC has near universal membership (currently 198 Parties) and these parties are subdivided into Annex I, Annex II and Annex B, Non-Annex I and Least Developed Countries. (The UNFCCC is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris Agreement.) The UNFCCC requires all parties in Annex I, of which the European Union 15 (EU 15) forms part of, to prepare and publish National Inventory Reports on emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for the preparation of Ireland's National Inventory Report (NIR).

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC.

All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including

institutional and administrative arrangements. A key task for the COP is to review the national communications and emission inventories submitted by Parties. Based on the collated NIR information from members, the COP assesses the effects of the measures taken by Parties and the progress made in achieving the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The EPA published Ireland's latest National Inventory Report (NIR) in March 2023 for the years 1990-2021. The inventory report will inform and guide Ireland's position at the UNFCCC COP28, held in Dubai from 30th November to 12th December 2023.

COP28 will be guided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis Report (March 2023), which highlighted that, '*accelerated action to adapt climate change is essential to close the gap between existing adaptation and what is needed. Keeping warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels requires deep, rapid and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors*', e.g. electricity. Crucially the IPCC Report (March 2023) stresses that, '*emissions should be decreasing by now and will need to be cut by almost half by 2030, if warming is to be limited to 1.5°C*'.

The focus for COP28 in Dubai includes: fast-tracking the move towards clean energy sources, the need to 'slash' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions before 2030, delivering finance and funding for climate action from richer to poorer countries, working on a new deal for developing nations, focusing on nature and people, and making COP28 the most inclusive event to date.

4.1.2 Kyoto Protocol (1997) & Paris Agreement (2015)

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in December 1997 at the Convention of the Parties (COP3) but did not enter into force until February 2005, when it was ratified by the majority of countries around the world (currently 192 Parties). This international agreement is linked to the UNFCCC and was designed to enable industrial nations to take a lead in addressing the problem of climate change. The major feature of this protocol is that it set binding targets on industrial countries, including the European Union and Ireland.

These developed countries agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions relative to 1990 levels for the period 2008-2012. It is noteworthy to highlight that Ireland met its Kyoto Protocol targets under the EU burden-sharing agreement. A second commitment was entered into under the Protocol to cover 2013-2020. This is known as the Doha Amendment, which was adopted in 2012 in Doha and came into force on ratification in December 2020. For the European Union (EU), the commitment to reducing GHG emissions largely mirrored that of the 2020 Climate and Energy Package but with some differences. However, this has now been superseded by the Paris Agreement (2015).

A major feature of the Kyoto Protocol was the establishment of flexible market mechanisms such as the Emissions Trading, Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation (JI).

These flexibility mechanisms allowed cost-effective trading in the marketplace. This is the basis of the world's first international emissions trading system, known as the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), of which Ireland is a key partner.

The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), has been operating since 2005 and enables EU Member States to achieve their commitments to limit or reduce GHG emissions in a cost-effective way. The EU ETS works on the 'cap and trade' principle. This means that greenhouse gas allowances are treated as a commodity or product that can be traded on the EU carbon market.

Companies that are regulated by the EU ETS include stationary installations such as power plants, industrial plants and other large energy users, and airlines.

The categories of activity covered by the EU ETS are set out in Annex 1 of the Directive 2003/87/EC and all the GHGs, to which the ETS applies, are set out in Annex 2. The EU ETS primarily targeted energy-intensive sectors e.g. power generation and is an essential part of the EU's overall policy to combat climate change.

The Paris Agreement (2015) is a legally-binding international treaty on climate change. The treaty was adopted by 196 parties at COP21 in Paris, France on the 12th December 2015 and entered into force on the 4th November 2016. Its overarching goal is to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In pursuit of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement (2015), the Irish Government enacted the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which are discussed in **Section 4.3** below.

4.1.3 UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015) & Ireland's Voluntary National Review for the UNGA78 (VNR, July and September 2023)

In 2015, Ireland and Kenya were tasked by the UN Secretary General to bring the world together to agree a plan to tackle global challenges by 2030. Following on from the key tenets of the Brundtland Commission (Our Common Future, 1987, which popularised the term 'Sustainable Development'), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (adopted in 2015) is a blueprint for sustainable development for the future. At its core, are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.

Along with 17 SDGs, there are 169 targets [and indicators] and the UN Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) evaluates the systemwide implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which focuses on the principle of 'Leave No-one Behind'. Ireland, as one of the 191 UN Member States, must display a commitment to implement the global sustainable development goals.

Specific SDGs and Targets that are highly-relevant to the Proposed Development in Co. Clare are set out in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1: UNSDGs and SDG Targets relevant to Oatfield Wind Farm, Co. Clare

SDG No.	Examples of SDG Targets – ‘By 2030...’
SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy	Target 7.2: Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.
SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth	Target 8.9: Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates job and promotes local culture and products.
SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities	Target 11a: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.
SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production	Target 12.8: Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.
SDG 13 – Climate Action	Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

Ireland’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDGs for the UNGA78, July and September 2023 Ireland, a co-chair of the original negotiations that led to the global adoption of the UNSDGs in 2015, presented its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) for SDGs to the United Nations High-level Political Forum in July 2023. According to the UN, VNRs aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the SDGs/2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs. Ireland’s VNR (2023) focused on the issue of energy and the need to double energy efficiency in the remainder of this decade, along with the need to triple renewable energy power, in order to have a chance of meeting the 1.5°C target (Government of Ireland, 2023). Ireland’s global leadership role was further strengthened as co-facilitator at the UNSDG Summit in New York in September 2023, as part of the overall UNGA78.

4.1.4 Proposed Development's Response to International/Global Policies

As a key signatory to the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and a global leader on the negotiation and formulation of the UN SDGs, it is important that Ireland delivers on its legally-binding international commitments in relation to climate action, e.g. the reduction of GHGs, along with meeting its high-level renewable energy and sustainable development goals and targets.

The Proposed Development, which is a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) with an expected Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 58.2 to 66 MW, is a micro-project in the overall solution to 'slash' GHG emissions by 2030, in order to meet the 1.5°C limit to temperature increase (above pre-industrial levels), as set by the UNFCCC. In addition, the Proposed Development supports the creation and delivery of clean energy, enhances overall energy sustainability and leads cumulatively to an increased share of renewable energy in the overall global energy mix.

4.2 European Union/European Commission Renewable Energy and Climate Change Policies

This section provides an overview of the accelerating policies at a European level that support the proposed wind farm development in Co. Clare:

1. Europe's Green Deal, (December 2019)
2. REPowerEU Plan, (May 2022 and Update March 2023)
3. European Wind Power Action Plan, October 2023

4.2.1 Europe's Green Deal (December 2019)

Europe's Green Deal is the European Commission (EC) over-arching strategy to make the EU more sustainable by 2050, recognising climate change and degradation of the natural environment as critical threats. The EU Green Deal includes an action plan and operates across nine policy areas - three of the key policy areas are of relevance to the proposed development and include:

- Clean Energy
- Sustainable Mobility
- Climate Action

The EC developed long-term goals through the roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050 (EC, COM (2011) 112 final), which states the EU's target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. Ultimately, the long-term goal of the EU is the decarbonisation of the power sector leading to a significant requirement for an increase in the contribution of renewables to the grid. European goals and targets to tackle climate and energy have been set in the form of EU Climate and Energy Packages.

The EU 2030 Climate and Energy Framework includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period from 2021 to 2030. The EU Framework continues on from the base set out from the preceding 20-20-20 Agreement, and sets new targets and measures to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. The EU's 2030 Climate and Energy Framework sets out binding targets relating to GHG emissions, renewables and energy efficiency to be met by each Member State by 2030, as follows:

- At least 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels), by 2030

- At least 32% share for renewable energy by 2030
- At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030

As part of the Green Deal, the EC proposed in September 2020, to increase the 2030 GHG emissions reduction target to at least 55%, compared to 1990. This increased target will enable the EU to become the first, 'climate-neutral' continent by 2050.

4.2.2 REPowerEU Plan, (May 2022 & Update March 2023)

EU Wind Energy Policy is accelerating at a rapid pace. For example, in response to volatility and global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission is implementing its REPowerEU Plan. Launched in May 2022, REPowerEU is helping the EU:

- Save energy
- Produce clean energy
- Diversify its energy supplies and energy mix

REPowerEU is accelerating the green transition and promoting massive investment in renewable energy throughout the European Union. The plan recognises the need to accelerate the consenting and permitting process, proposing that Member State designate 'Go-to' areas where renewable energy development would be permitted in principle, and declares renewable energy as an overriding public interest. To give effect to this, the European Council adopted Regulation 2022/2577 in December 2022 laying down a strategic framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy throughout the European Union.

In March 2023, the European Union agreed on stronger legislation to increase its renewables capacity, raising the EU's binding target for 2030 to 42.5%, with the ambition to reach 45% - this would almost double the existing share of renewable energy in the European Union.

4.2.3 European Wind Power Action Plan, (October 2023)

Following on from President Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union address in September 2023, the European Wind Power Action Plan was launched on the 24th October 2023. This important Europe-wide action plan has six key pillars, as follows:

- I. **Acceleration of deployment through increased predictability and faster permitting:** Member States will set up detailed Implementation Plans for the revised Renewable Energy Directive/RED (COM 2021/557) e.g. by April 2024, the EU will provide guidance to Member States on the designation of *Renewable Acceleration Areas* and formulation of comprehensive 10-Year Plans for the deployment of renewables.
- II. **Improved Auction Design:** strengthening the clarity of non-price award criteria that are critical to rewarding sustainability, innovation, energy system integration, high-quality products and the contribution to a resilient supply chain.
- III. **Access to Finance:** facilitate access to EU financing, European Investment Bank (EIB) to provide de-risking tools and guarantees for EU wind companies, Member States to make full use of flexibility provided under State aid rules for EU wind value chain, and Commission to strengthen dialogue with investors to foster the attractiveness of investment in the EU's wind sector.

- IV. **Ensuring a Fair and Competitive International Environment:** European Commission to facilitate EU manufacturers' access to foreign markets, protect the internal market against trade distortions and threat to security/public order, and enhance standardisation needs and deliverables for the EU wind energy sector.
- V. **Skills:** it is estimated that about 100,000 additional jobs will be needed in the wind sector by 2030. Large-scale skills partnerships for renewable energy are needed, particularly targeting women, young people (not in education, employment or training) and older people with a particular focus on sustainability and circular economy practices. The partnerships can benefit from the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Centres for Vocational Excellence.
- VI. **Industry Engagement and Member States Commitments:** develop further long-term partnerships between wind manufacturers and wind operators, which can be of mutual benefit. Introduction of EU Wind Charter before the end of 2023 aimed at implementing the actions of the Commission, Member States and industrial stakeholders in consultation with social partners.

4.2.4 Proposed Development's Response to European Renewable Energy & Climate Change Policy

The Proposed Development strongly aligns with accelerating European policy to support renewable energy and climate action throughout the European Union. The proposal will lead directly to a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and an enhanced share of renewable energy, as required by European policies. Cumulatively, the Proposed Development will also contribute to the EU becoming the first, climate neutral continent by 2050.

Specifically, in relation to the European Wind Power Action Plan's *Renewable Acceleration Areas*, it should be highlighted that the Proposed Development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, as it is located within a designated 'Strategic Area' for wind: 10 wind turbines are located within this designated area and one wind turbine (T4) is located on the edge of the Strategic Area, within an area where wind energy is 'Accepted in Principle'.

We return to Strategic Areas for wind in the following chapter below when examining the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and its Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) and Wind Energy Strategy (WES) in **Chapter 5 of the Planning Report** – Regional and Local Planning Policy Context.

4.3 National Plans and Policies

As noted above, National energy and climate policy is very much derived from and driven by overarching European Policy, which aims to unify the European Union in relation to renewable energy and climate change goals. The following section sets out the relevant national policies which are influencing the development of the State now, and in the coming decades, with respect to energy production, carbon neutrality and climate change mitigation, namely:

- I. *Ireland's Climate Action Plan (CAP2023) and Progress Reports, Q2 & Q3 2023 (July & November 2023)*
- II. *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections, 2022-2040 (EPA, June 2023)*

- III. *Ireland's 2nd National Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 (DECC, October 2022)*
- IV. *Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework (NPF, 2018) & 1st Revision (June 2023)*
- V. *Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2021-2030*

These important national policies are supported by the Ireland's Programme for Government (PfG, June 2020) 'Our Shared Future', which presents strong, national climate governance on rapidly accelerating climate change, in order to protect and improve public health and overall quality of life. Through the PfG, the Irish Government is committed to the rapid decarbonisation of the national energy sector with an aim of providing the necessary actions to deliver national renewable electricity targets in line with European and international targets. Irish Government ambitions also support the ongoing generation of renewable energy from onshore (and offshore) wind sources, as detailed below.

4.3.1 Ireland's Climate Action Plan (CAP2023) & Progress Reports, Q2 & Q3 2023 (July & November 2023)

The Irish Government published the Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP2023) in December 2022. The Climate Action Plan is the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan in 2019, which was the first plan prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2015.

Ireland's CAP2023 implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emission ceilings and sets out the national roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's GHG emissions by 2030. CAP2023 sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social, cultural and economic development activities.

CAP2023 follows on from previous CAPs and provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a specific 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government (PfG, June 2020) and set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Among the most important measures in CAP2023, is to increase the proportion of renewable electricity to 80% by 2030 and a target of 9 GW (or 9,000MW) from onshore wind, 8 GW from solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind energy by 2030.

4.3.2 CAP2023 Progress Report, Q2/July 2023

Ireland's CAP2023 Progress Report Q2, published in July 2023, states that the Plan has a delivery rate of 63%. Crucially, the Progress Report references an EPA GHG Emissions Projections Report (June 2023), which states that Ireland is projected - to fall short of its climate targets, it will not meet the first two carbon budgets (2021-2030), and will only achieve a 29% reduction in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions even if all planned climate measures are fully implemented.

The report states: *"this suggests that much work remains in elaborating policies and effective delivery mechanisms to make the planned emissions reductions at the scale and pace required"*.

4.3.3 CAP2023 – Progress Report, Q3/November 2023

Ireland's CAP Progress Report Q3, published in November 2023, states that the Plan has a combined delivery rate (Q1+Q2+Q3) of 67%. The report notes that the trend of extreme weather has worsened and that July 2023 was recorded as the warmest month on record globally. Ireland experienced record-breaking levels of rain in July 2023, with 215% of its long-term average expected rainfall and four times that seen in July 2022. This weather pattern followed the hottest June recorded, demonstrating *'the impact of climate change and unpredictable weather patterns on a national level'*.

November's progress report highlights that actions in 2023, which were delayed, include the Renewable Electricity Spatial Policy Framework (RESPF) and a Policy Framework for Electricity Storage (PFES). Deliverables that were met include the commencement of consents by the new Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) along with onshore and offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions.

Both the July and November 2023 Progress Reports highlight that the RESPF is expected in Q1 2024. The progress reports envisage that the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP2024) is currently being formulated by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). It is expected that Ireland's accelerated targets will reflect the volatile geo-political situation in Ukraine and the Middle East, along with new EU Wind Power Action Plan published in October 2023, which promotes *'Renewable Acceleration Areas'*.

4.3.4 Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections, 2022-2040 (EPA, June 2023)

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications' national climate change position, which includes the Climate Action Acts of 2015 and 2019, designated the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with responsibility for developing annual national emission projections for greenhouse gases for all key sectors of the economy, including electricity. The EPA publishes greenhouse gas (GHG) emission projections on an annual basis and submits emission projections to the European Commission, as required under Monitoring Mechanism Regulation EU No. 525/2013.

The EPA's publication, entitled Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2022-2040 (June 2023), provides an updated assessment of Ireland's projected greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions out to 2040. The 2023 Projections include an assessment of progress towards achieving its emission reduction targets to 2030.

Ireland's new 2030 target under the EU's Effort Sharing Regulation (EU No. 842/2018) is to limit its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 42% by 2030. This target was set in April 2023 upon amendment of the EU Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR). The 42% reduction defines the trajectory with annual binding emission limits over the period to 2030. According to the EPA, reaching the new 42% EU emission reduction target *'will require full and rapid implementation of Climate Action Plan 2023 measures and further measures to be implemented'*.

In addition, the EPA Report (June 2023) provides the following summary in relation to Ireland's Climate Act ambition:

'Ireland is not on track to meet the 51% emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018) based on these projections which include most 2023 Climate Action Plan measures. Further measures still need to be identified and implemented to achieve this goal'.

The EPA Report also states that, 'Emissions from the Energy Industries sector are projected to decrease by between 50 and 60 per cent over the period 2021 to 2030. Renewable energy generation is projected to range from 68 to over 80 per cent of electricity generation as a result of projected further and rapid expansion in wind energy and other renewables'. Ireland's 2nd National Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 (DECC, October 2022)

At a national level, Ireland's 2nd National Implementation Plan (NIP) for Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 was published by the Irish Government in October 2022. [The NIP was a precursor to Ireland's Voluntary National Review 2023 and leadership role at the UNSDG Summit at part of the UNGA78 in September 2023, as discussed above]. The NIP was developed by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) in collaboration with all Government Departments, key stakeholders, and based on input from two in-depth public consultation processes.

Section 5.3.4 of Ireland's 2nd NIP for SDGs highlights the need for good policy alignment between the UNSDGs and Irish national, regional, and local spatial planning policy.

Ireland's 2nd NIP for SDGs also highlights that in recent years, the number of communities that are carrying out Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), to assess their progress toward specific targets and indicators in Agenda 2030 and the overall delivery of the SDGs at a local level, has increased considerably across the world.

4.3.5 National Planning Framework (NPF, 2018) & 1st Revision (June 2023)

As a strategic development framework, Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF, 2018), aims to join up ambitions for improvement across the different areas of Irish life, bringing the various government departments, agencies, State-owned enterprises, and local authorities together behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development, as follows:

"The National Planning Framework is a planning framework to guide development and investment over the coming years. It does not provide every detail for every part of the country; rather it empowers each region to lead in the planning and development of their communities, containing a set of national objectives and key principles from which more detailed and refined plans will follow".

The Vision for the NPF (Section 1) states that there is significant alignment between the UN SDGs and the National Planning Framework's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health.

The NPF sets out the strategic goals and objectives for the State, and central to this is the theme of Realising Our Sustainable Future. In particular, Section 9.2 of the NPF entitled 'Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy' states the following:

"Our transition to a low carbon energy future requires:

- *A shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources;*
- *Increasing efficiency and upgrading to appliances, buildings and systems;*
- *Decisions around development and deployment of new technologies relating to areas such as wind, smart grids, electric vehicles, buildings, ocean energy and bio energy; and*

- *Legal and regulatory frameworks to meet demands and challenges in transitioning to a low carbon economy”.*

The NPF is supported by a series of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), which the framework seeks to deliver. The purpose of the NSOs is to create a single vision, through a shared set of goals for every community across the country. The most pertinent outcomes in the context of the proposed renewable energy project in Co. Clare are, as follows:

- **National Strategic Outcome 3:** Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
- **National Strategic Outcome 5:** A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
- **National Strategic Outcome 8:** Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

The NPF also sets out a series of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) that were developed to set the context for national, regional and local planning policy in Ireland. In the context of the proposed wind farm development, the following NPOs set out in **Table 4-2** are considered the most relevant.

Table 4-2: NPF - Relevant National Policy Objectives (NPOs)

National Policy Objective	Description
National Policy Objective 15	<i>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.</i>
National Policy Objective 21	<i>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.</i>
National Policy Objective 23	<i>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.</i>
National Policy Objective 52	<i>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.</i>
National Policy Objective 54	<i>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.</i>
National Policy Objective 55	<i>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.</i>

NPF Section 1.2: Making the Vision a Reality, recognises the need for new energy systems and transmission grids in order to deliver a more distributed, renewable focused national energy system, in order to harness the potential from wind, wave and solar energy sources.

“The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.”

With regard to planning and investment for rural locations, Section 5.4 of the NPF: Planning and Investment to Support Rural Job Creation, recognises the key role of renewable energy production in assisting in the rejuvenation of rural towns and villages to create and sustain vibrant rural communities.

“Rural areas have significantly contributed to the energy needs of the country and will continue to do so, having a strong role to play in securing a sustainable renewable energy supply. In planning Ireland’s future energy landscape and in transitioning to a low carbon economy, the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies is essential. Innovative and novel renewable energy solutions have been delivered in rural areas over the last number of years, particularly from solar, wind and biomass energy sources.”

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) commenced the first revision of the NPF in June 2023, to take account of the growing global prominence of climate issues, an accelerated increase in population during 2022/2023, the impact of Covid-19 in relation to emergence of blended working, and the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and, more recently, the Middle East, etc.

4.3.6 Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2021-2030

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) published in October 2021, in tandem with the National Planning Framework (NPF), sets out the Government’s over-arching public investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. The NDP aims to balance the demand for public investment across all sectors with focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects. The plan provides a platform from which investment can be provided and strategised in terms of economic growth, development and sustainability needs.

The key role of the NDP is to set out the updated configuration for public capital investment over the next 10 years, in order to achieve the NSOs, as set out within the NPF. The NDP outlines a number of key energy initiatives that set out to diversify our energy resources, and to assist in the transition towards a decarbonised society.

The NDP emphasises National Strategic Outcome 8: Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society, noting that:

“The Government will continue to support the deployment of additional electricity generation through the auction-based Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)”.

In order to achieve a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society, the NDP outlines strategic investment priorities that should be actioned. These relate to the aims of the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme. It is stated that the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) auctions will deliver competitive levels of onshore wind electricity generation, which indicatively could be up to 8 GW of onshore wind by 2030. [The NDP also outlines that the RESS will also support the delivery of up to 5 GW of additional offshore renewable electricity generation by 2030.] It should be noted that these targets have been increased by CAP23 (see **Section 4.3.1** above).

It is considered that such schemes, in conjunction with greater investment in renewable energy, diversity of supply, and increased utilisation and adoption of electricity storage, will significantly assist in promoting a low-carbon/less energy-intensive supply. The investments outlined within the NDP will make a critical contribution to the achievement of a low carbon and resilient electricity system within the country.

4.3.7 Proposed Development’s Response to National Plans & Policies

The Proposed Development in Co. Clare, which has an expected MEC of between 52.8-66MW, will contribute to the overall aims and objectives of existing and emerging Climate Action Plans by reducing Ireland’s ongoing shortfall in meeting its climate targets, and will also contribute positively

to the reduction of GHG emissions, required at a national level, as per EU Directives. The need for a significant reduction in GHG emissions is more pressing given the recent reporting from the EPA that Ireland is not on track to meeting its emissions reduction targets.

In terms of promoting good governance in rapidly-accelerating climate change, the Proposed Development strengthens policy alignment between the UNSDGs and Irish national planning policy, which is a key aim of Ireland's 2nd National Implementation Plan for SDGs. This is particularly important given Ireland's unique role within the UN in relation to the negotiation of SDGs back in 2015, as noted above.

Significantly, the Proposed Development will make a welcome contribution towards the delivery of Ireland's NSOs and NPOs within the NPF and the NSOs contained within the NDP, specifically addressing the need for sustainable development and an accelerated transition to a low carbon, climate-neutral and climate resilient society by 2050.

In addition, it is submitted that the Proposed Development will contribute to the overall aims of the NPF's first revision announced in June 2023, which focuses on accelerating efforts concerning climate-related issues and the transition to a low carbon economy. This contribution will manifest through the generation, connection and provision of renewable electricity to Ireland's national grid.

4.4 Other National Policies

4.4.1 Section 28 Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 & Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019

The Wind Energy Development Planning Guidelines (2006), published by the former Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government sets out advice to planning authorities assessing planning applications for wind farm developments in Ireland. The S28 Guidelines set out criteria, which assist in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development. The Guidelines 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, siting and layout of the Oatfield Wind Farm in Co. Clare. The Proposed Development is considered to be in line with the recommendations, as set out in the Guidelines.

4.4.2 Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (December 2019)

The S28 Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines published in December 2019 for public consultation and follow on from the S28 Wind Energy Guidelines 2006. The draft guidelines primarily focus on '*addressing a number of key aspects including noise, visual amenity setback, shadow flicker, community consultation obligations, community dividend and grid connections*'. These guidelines will supersede the 2006 guidelines once formally adopted by government. The revised guidelines aim to apply consistency across all Renewable Energy Strategies with regard to Development Management aims and objectives. The 2019 Guidelines are still in draft format at the time of preparing this Planning Report.

The key points to note in the draft Revised Guidelines (2019) include:

- Revised set back distances: 4 times the tip height is to be applied between turbines and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property with a mandatory minimum set back distance of 500m to be applied;

- Revised noise limits provide a higher level of protection to nearby residential receptors. The draft guidelines propose a noise limit, referred to as a 'Relative Rates Noise Limit (RRNL) in the range of 35-43 dB(A) while not exceeding the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) with an upper limit of 43 dB(A);
- The draft guidelines confirm a policy of zero shadow flicker at nearby existing dwellings or other affected properties;
- Wind energy developers will have to provide an opportunity for the proposed development to be of enduring economic or social benefit to the local community, whether by facilitating community investment/ownership in the project, other types of benefits/dividends, or a combination of the two.

The Proposed Development has been designed in accordance with the current Section 28 Guidelines, Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. We are aware that these guidelines are subject to targeted review and therefore the design of the project has had regard to the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in 2019.

In this regard, the proposed layout has achieved a minimum separation distance of approximately 720m between turbine locations and the closest dwellings. The proposed development is therefore in compliance with this provision. In addition, an objective to avoid shadow flicker at nearby dwellings through mitigation measures has also been included in the project, in line with the draft guidelines.

Furthermore, the project will provide a Community Benefit Fund for the nearby community consisting of financial support for near neighbours and community-led projects, in line with the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) Community Benefit Fund Good Practice Principles Handbook published in July 2021¹. A particular focus of the funds is to support local initiatives that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (see **Sections 4.1.3** and **4.3.2** above which discuss the UNSDGs). The Oatfield Community Benefit Fund will contribute €2/MWh for all Renewable Energy Share: Electricity (RES-E) generation produced for projects receiving support from the RESS (as described in **Section 4.3.4** above).

The draft Guidelines are referred to in **EIAR Chapter 13 Noise and Vibration** in relation to the methodology for assessment. This specific EIAR chapter notes that the draft Guidelines may be subject to the further revisions following public consultation. As such, the noise limits in the 2006 guidelines form the basis of the assessment. Furthermore, the 2019 draft guidelines have a number of technical errors, ambiguities and inconsistencies relating to noise assessment and requires further detailed review and amendment.

It should also be noted that an Oireachtas debate, which took place on the 15th June 2021, on renewable energy included the following parliamentary question (PQ) response from the former Minister for State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (and now Minister of State at the Department of Defence), Peter Burke TD:

'When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála, must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their

¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5f12f-community-projects-and-benefit-funds-ress/>

functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

4.5 Conclusions on International, EU/EC and National Policy Context

The Proposed Development in Co. Clare has been conceptualised and designed in accordance, and in alignment, with important international, EU/EC and national frameworks, plans and policies, including the recently published European Wind Power Action Plan (October 2023), which includes *Renewable Acceleration Areas*. The Proposed Development, which is located in a *Strategic Area* and *Acceptable in Principle* for wind energy development, is of strategic national economic and social importance, as it will facilitate the sustainable development and diversification of Ireland's rural economy. The Proposed Development also supports the overall renewable energy sector and increases the share of renewables in Ireland's overall energy mix, as per national and European/international policy.

In addition, the Proposed Development promotes the generation of renewable energy at an appropriate rural location, for both wind energy and grid connection, and supports the achievement of a low carbon economy for Ireland by 2050. It is therefore considered that the Proposed Development very much aligns with national policy and fully supports the achievement of national energy, climate change and sustainability targets, as required by EU legislation and international/UN targets, protocols and conventions.

The widening and deepening of policy examined throughout this chapter sets out significant international, European, and national support for an accelerated transition to renewable energy technologies, a slashing of greenhouse gas emissions and emboldened climate action. Europe's recently published Europe Wind Power Action Plan (October 2023) is driving this accelerated transition towards renewable wind energy.

Ireland is committed to meeting International and European targets and, if these targets are not met, the Irish government must purchase costly Carbon Credits to meet compliance with both emissions and renewable energy targets or, alternatively, face steep fines from the European Commission.

The Proposed Development, which has an expected MEC of between 58.2-66MW, will contribute to the overall aims and objectives of existing and emerging Climate Action Plans (i.e. CAP2023 and CAP2024) by reducing Ireland's ongoing shortfall in meeting its climate targets, and will also contribute positively to the reduction of GHG emissions, required at a national level, as per EU Directives. The need for a significant reduction in GHG emissions is more pressing given ongoing reporting from the EPA that Ireland is not on track to meeting its emissions reduction targets.

There is a clear national mandate to accommodate significant onshore wind energy infrastructure within the remainder of this decade, i.e. 2030. Furthermore, the National Planning Framework (NPF) emphasises a move to a low-carbon economy to reduce Ireland's carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets.

The 1st revision of the National Planning Framework (2018), which is currently underway by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, is focusing on the renewed need for effective climate action & transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy and society.



Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed Development very much aligns with national policy and fully supports the achievement of national energy, climate change and sustainability targets, as required by EU legislation and international/UN targets, protocols and conventions.

5 REGIONAL & LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The Proposed Development is also in accordance with the rapidly-accelerating climate change, renewable energy and sustainable development policy framework operating at a Regional and Local level in Ireland, as set out below.

1.1 Regional Policy

5.1.1 Southern Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020

The Southern Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) came into effect in January 2020. The RSES sets out a strategy to implement the National Planning Framework (NPF) at a regional level. It also sets out a strategic vision which includes actions to mitigate against climate change. The RSES recognises the urgency to transition towards a low carbon economy and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture to safeguard and enhance the region, driving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. The RSES states the following in relation to wind energy:

“Wind energy is currently the largest contributor of renewable energy and it has the potential to achieve between 11-66GW of onshore wind and 30GW of offshore wind by 2050. The sector can make a significant contribution to meeting national energy demands while attaining our energy targets for 2020 and beyond”.

The Southern RSES sets out innovative Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) to promote: Rural Development, the Low Carbon (Circular) Economy, the Environment, Renewable Energy and Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection. These innovative regional policy objectives all support the Proposed Development in Co. Clare and are summarised in **Table 5-1**.

Table 5-1: Relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for the Southern Region

Policy	Description
RPO 50	<i>It is an objective to further develop a diverse base of smart economic specialisms across the rural Region, including innovation and diversification in (among other things) renewable energy as a dynamic driver for the rural economy.</i>
RPO 56 (a-c)	<i>a. The RSES recognises the urgency to transition to a low carbon future and it is therefore an objective to accelerate the transition towards low carbon economy and circular economy through mechanisms such as the Climate Action Competitive Fund. b. It is an objective to develop enterprises that create and employ green technologies. c. Local authorities should ensure that the development of green industry and technologies incorporates careful consideration of potential environmental impacts at project level including the capacity of receiving environment and existing infrastructure to serve new industries.</i>
RPO 95	<i>It is an objective to support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP)², and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan and the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.</i>

Policy	Description
RPO 99	<i>It is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.</i>
RPO 100	<i>It is an objective to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection.</i>

The Southern Regional Assembly's **RSES Chapter 8: Water and Energy Utilities** highlights that:

'A safe, secure and reliable supply of energy is critical to a well-functioning Region. With projected increases in population and economic growth, the demand for energy is set to increase in the coming years. In moving towards a more energy efficient society and an increase in renewable sources, there is a need to set a policy approach which will meet national targets for renewable electricity generation, climate change and security of energy supplies.'

SRA RSES Chapter 8 continues,

'There is significant potential to use renewable energy across the Region to achieve climate change emission reduction targets. With costs actively driven down by innovation in solar, onshore and offshore wind in particular, the renewable industry is increasingly cost competitive. The RSES supports renewable industries and requirements for transmission and distribution infrastructure.'

In pursuit of this aim, the Southern SES Chapter 8: Water and Energy Utilities sets out specific energy-related regional policy objectives for the Southern Region of Ireland which support the Proposed Development in Co. Clare. Relevant RPOs are set out in **Table 5-2** below.

Table 5-2: Energy-related Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for the Southern Region

Policy	Description
RPO 219	<i>It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.</i>
RPO 220	<i>It is an objective to support the Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM) as a key priority for the Region and seek the sustainable development and reinforcement to the energy grid including grid connections, transboundary networks into and through the Region and between all adjacent Regions subject to appropriate environmental assessment and planning processes.</i>
RPO 221	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Local Authority City and County Development Plans shall support the sustainable development of renewable energy generation and demand centres such as data centres which can be serviced with a renewable energy source (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to spatially suitable locations to ensure efficient use of the existing transmission network;</i> b) <i>The RSES supports strengthened and sustainable local/community renewable energy networks, micro renewable generation, climate smart countryside projects and connections for such initiatives to the grid. The potential for sustainable local/community energy projects and micro generation to both mitigate climate change and to reduce fuel poverty is also supported;</i> c) <i>The RSES supports the Southern Region as a Carbon Neutral Energy Region.</i>
RPO 222	<i>It is an objective to support the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and to support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity networks and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this plan under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity.</i>
RPO 223	<i>It is an objective to support the sustainable development of international energy interconnection infrastructure and support the sustainable development (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) of the Celtic Interconnector project between Ireland and France from a location in the Region.</i>
RPO 224	<i>Local Authorities shall work in partnership with existing service providers to facilitate required enhancement and upgrading of existing infrastructure and networks (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning progress) and support the safeguarding of strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other development that could comprise the delivery of energy networks.</i>

5.1.2 Proposed Development's Response to the Southern Regional Assembly RSES Policies

The Proposed Development supports the delivery and realisation of numerous regional policy objectives, as set out in the RSES including: diversification of the rural economy, climate actions to mitigate climate change, and the sustainable development of wind energy at an appropriate location. The Proposed Development is for an onshore wind farm and grid connection to the existing grid network in Co. Clare, at a location which supports the existing strategic energy corridor and 110kV line.

Crucially, the Proposed Development supports regional policy objectives in relation to Renewable Energy and Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection thereby reducing the need to import energy from outside the State. In addition, the Proposed Development aligns with the regional policy approach, which will enable the region to contribute to meeting national targets for renewable electricity generation, climate change and security of energy supplies.

5.2 Local Policy – Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

This section reviews the statutory Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, which was adopted in March 2023 and came into effect in April 2023. It also reviews the Clare Local Economic and Community Development Plan (LECDP) and the emerging County Heritage Plan 2023-2029, as the previous Heritage Plan 2017-2023 has almost run out.

5.2.1 Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Statutory)

The following volumes, policy and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 are relevant to the proposed wind farm development in Oatfield, East Clare:

- Clare CDP Volume 1: Written Statement (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 16).
- Clare CDP Volume 5: Clare Renewable Energy Strategy (RES).
- Clare CDP Volume 6: Clare Wind Energy Strategy (WES).
- Clare CDP Volume 1: Written Statement

The current County Development Plan (CDP) for Clare is the comprehensive CDP 2023-2029, (circa 600 pages). Volume 1: Written Statement sets out the planning policies and objectives that are relevant to the Proposed Development at Oatfield, East Clare, as contained in Chapter 1: Introduction and Vision, a new stand-alone chapter: Chapter 2: Climate Action, Chapter 3: Core Strategy, Chapter 8: Rural Development and Natural Resources, Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities, Chapter 11: Physical Infrastructure, Environment and Energy, Chapter 14: Landscape, Chapter 15: Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure and Chapter 16: Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage.

5.2.2 CDP Chapter 1: Introduction and Vision

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 considers the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), planning guidelines, strategies and policy documents. The CDP is also informed by specific national and global environmental issues that are accepted as being critical to the formulation and implementation of sustainable development including climate change, flooding, renewable and alternative energy.

Clare CDP includes the following strategic Goals at a county-wide level, which support the proposed wind farm development, namely Goal I, Goal XIII and Goal XX:

‘Goal I: A county that is resilient to climate change, plans for and adapts to climate change and flood risk, is the national leader in renewable energy generation, facilitates a low carbon future, supports energy efficiency and conservation and enables the decarbonisation of our lifestyles and economy.’

‘Goal XIII: A county of ‘living landscapes’ where people live, work, recreate and visit while respecting, managing and taking pride in the unique landscape of the county’.

‘Goal XX: A county that plays a fundamental role in the transition from a linear to a circular economy, through being responsible for key policies in public services that affect citizens' wellbeing, economic growth and environmental quality, and by fostering the linkages to transition from linear model to a circular model which keeps resources in use for as long as possible.’

Chapter 1: Introduction and Vision of the Clare CDP states that ‘this Plan adopts the principle of sustainability by promoting and encouraging the integration of economic, environmental, social and cultural considerations into policies and objectives to ensure that the needs of urban and rural communities are met. Any reference to development in this plan should be considered to refer to sustainable development’.

5.2.3 CDP Chapter 2 – Climate Action:

Chapter 2 of the Clare CDP 2023-2029 is a new stand-alone chapter which states that, *‘the plan requires a large-scale deployment of renewables and includes an acceleration of the delivery of onshore wind to 9GW, solar energy to 8GW and offshore wind to at least 5GW’*. Chapter 2.4 states that, *‘to guide, support and facilitate County Clare’s transition to a low carbon and climate resilient county it is necessary to implement a wide array of measures during the plan period. Having regard to the county’s significant available renewable resources, Clare County Council will seek to take a lead role in respect of renewable energy technology to assist in meeting national, regional and county targets in energy consumption and CO2 reduction’*.

The CDP includes targets for the plan period, which are discussed below:

CDP Objective 2.2(f): *It is an objective of Clare County Council: ‘To facilitate and support the relevant stakeholders and enterprises in the progression of advancements in climate adaptation solutions and renewable energy generation and technologies’*.

The CDP’s Climate Action highlights that a key requirement of community health and wellbeing is the building of capacity and resilience to the impacts of climate change within communities and this is reflected in the plan objectives. This is achievable through raising awareness of climate change issues within communities, assessing the risks for vulnerable communities, and the preparation and implementation of programmes to respond to these risks.

Section 2.7.6 of the CDP state that, *‘through the Renewable Energy Strategy, the Wind Energy Strategy, and the related objectives of the Development Plan the Council will support and facilitate renewable energy use and sustainable generation at appropriate locations within both the county and its offshore waters to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050’*.

Proposed Development’s Response to CDP Climate Action:

The proposed wind farm aligns with the Clare County Development Plan in relation to Climate Action and includes a Community Report and Community Benefit Fund (CBF) for the life time of the project, which seeks to support the CDP objectives in relation to climate action and the achievement of a low carbon economy in Co. Clare, and specifically East Clare.

5.2.4 CDP Chapter 3 - Core Strategy:

The preparation of a Core Strategy as part of the Clare Development Plan 2023-2029 establishes a transparent, evidence-based strategy for the sustainable spatial development of the county. The Strategic Aims of the Core Strategy include, *'To provide a framework within which the provision of sustainable infrastructure, amenities, economic investment and development can take place to maximise the use of resources in the county, for current and future generations'*.

As noted above, Ireland's National Planning Framework is currently undergoing its first revision announced in June 2023. One of the reasons for this revision is due to the significant population growth in the country during the last three years. It is submitted that the population in County Clare is increasing at an accelerated rate, i.e. beyond that predicted in the NPF.

The CDP Core Strategy, in terms of a settlement strategy, is to focus on developing and strengthening the role of the Key Town of Ennis, the Metropolitan Town of Shannon, the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area, the Service Towns, Small Towns and villages and the sustainable development of rural areas.

Proposed Development's Response to CDP Core Strategy:

The proposed wind farm and grid connection supports the focus of the CDP Core Strategy as it is located approximately 9.2km north of Limerick City and 19.7km southeast of the county town of Ennis.

Objective CDP3.3: Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment states that: *'It is an objective of the Clare County Council:*

- a. To require compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive, specifically Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4), Birds, Water Framework, and all other relevant EU Directives and all relevant transposing national legislation;
- b. To require project planning to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project development and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to species, where required together with the preparation of both statutory and non-Statutory Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA);
- c. To protect, manage and enhance ecological connectivity and improve the coherence of the Natura 2000 Network;
- d. To require all proposals to ensure there is 'no net loss' of biodiversity within developments;
- e. To ensure that European sites and Natural Heritage Areas (designated proposed NHAs) are appropriately protected;

- f. To require the preparation and assessment of all Plans and Projects to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report contained in Volume 10 of this Development Plan; and
- g. to require compliance with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and support the implementation of the 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan (and any other iteration during the lifetime of the CDP).

Proposed Development’s Response to CDP Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment:

The Proposed Development for a wind farm and grid connection has been prepared in accordance with the above environmental assessments, as required by the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. The Planning Application to An Bord Pleanála is accompanied by the following in-depth environmental assessments in keeping with the key tenets of the CDP and best practice environmental management and sustainable development:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Non-Technical Summary (NTS)
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Archaeological Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) Report

5.2.5 CDP Chapter 6: Economic Development and Enterprise

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out an economic strategy to achieve greater prosperity in all areas of the County. This strategy, which is in accordance with the overall vision for the County, includes the following strategic aims:

- To ensure that the benefits of economic growth and prosperity are spread to all parts of the County;
- To maximise the return from the economic assets of the County including Ennis, the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area, Shannon International Airport, University of Limerick – Clare Campus, the Shannon Estuary, the proposed South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone, County Clare’s rural and tourist attractions and access to talent;
- To ensure that Ennis and Shannon continue to develop as drivers of economic growth in County Clare and the Southern Region;
- To proactively implement the economic element of the adopted Clare Local Economic and Community Plan;
- To maintain and promote County Clare’s broad economic and employment base;
- To encourage, support and facilitate enterprise development at appropriate locations throughout the County;
- To encourage, support and facilitate research, technology development and innovation as well as start-up business with high potential;

- To maintain, adapt and promote the industrial areas in Shannon as a driver of economic and industrial growth throughout the Region;
- To facilitate the diversification of the County's rural economy and work practices and to encourage cottage industry and micro-enterprise; and
- To support where appropriate the further establishment of digital hubs across the County which facilitate enterprises and local communities by accommodating e-working, small-scale training and conferencing.

Chapter 6 includes the following policy objectives which are relevant to the proposed wind farm development and supporting Community Report and Community Benefit Fund during the life-time of the project:

Objective CDP6.12: Clare Digital Hub Network: It is an objective of Clare County Council: To support the continued development of the network of digital hubs in order to facilitate remote working/co-working at appropriate locations, to attract new businesses to locate in County Clare, and to support the further growth and development of the digital and media industries in the county.

Objective CDP6.17: Energy Supply: It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To contribute to the economic development and enhanced employment opportunities in the county by:
 - i. Enabling the development of a self-sustaining, secure, reliable and efficient renewable energy supply and storage for the County in line with CDP Objective 3.3;
 - ii. Facilitating the county to become a leader in the production of sustainable and renewable energy for national and international consumption through research, technology development and innovation; and
 - iii. Supporting on-land and off-shore renewable energy production by a range of appropriate technologies in line with CDP Objective 3.3.

Proposed Development's Response to CDP Economic Development and Enterprise:

The Proposed Development aligns and supports the delivery of these important policy objectives by providing secure, reliable and efficient renewable energy supply. The Proposed Development will help to supply the rising demand for electricity, resulting from renewed economic growth. During construction, additional employment will be created in the region through the supply of services and materials to the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development will also have a number of long-term benefits for the local economy, including security of energy supply, energy sustainability and facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy.

5.2.6 CDP Chapter 8: Rural Development and Natural Resources:

Chapter 8 of the CDP highlights that there is significant potential for the development of renewable energy in County Clare. Chapter 8 of the CDP includes the following Strategic Aims in relation to rural development and natural resources - To:

- Reinforce the vitality and future of rural villages and settlements and to recognise the roles that they play in the wider social and economic context;

- To encourage and support the social and economic development of rural parts of the County;
- To support local rural economies and communities and facilitate the diversification of local rural enterprises and work practices;
- To ensure that key assets of rural areas such as the natural and built environment are protected and enhanced, and that rural areas with resources such as renewable energy, water sources, and aggregates are sustainably developed; and
- To harness a pride of place among rural communities and to assist rural communities to promote their cultural and natural resources.

According to the CDP **Section 8.3.4 Renewable Energy**, 'the County has one of the best wind resources in the world – almost the entire County has either an excellent or very good wind energy resource'.

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 also highlights that the development and siting of wind energy projects '*must be balanced with the potential impacts on the landscape, ecology and the amenities of local communities*'. Areas that are considered suitable for commercial wind energy developments are set out in Volume 6 Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) of the CDP – we review Volume 6 RES in detail below. A key Rural Development and Natural Resources objective relevant to the proposed wind farm development includes:

Objective CDP8.2: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council: 'To encourage growth and arrest the decline of rural areas through supporting the sustainable development of these areas by:

- a. Facilitating innovative rural enterprises and the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability;
- b. To give favourable consideration to the sustainable development of existing and start-up rural resource-based industries in rural areas;
- c. Supporting and facilitating proposals for new small-scale rural enterprises or extensions to existing small-scale rural based indigenous industries;
- d. Encouraging new commercial uses for vacant or derelict buildings, including historic buildings and buildings in rural areas subject to compliance with appropriate planning, wildlife legislation and service requirements; and
- e. Encouraging and supporting the sustainable development of new rural and farm-related enterprises, existing initiatives, innovation in indigenous enterprise (both high-tech and traditional) and on and off farm employment activities'.

Objective CDP8.2: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council: 'To encourage growth and arrest the decline of rural areas through supporting the sustainable development of these areas by:

- a. Facilitating innovative rural enterprises and the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability;
- b. To give favourable consideration to the sustainable development of existing and start-up rural resource-based industries in rural areas;

- c. Supporting and facilitating proposals for new small-scale rural enterprises or extensions to existing small-scale rural based indigenous industries;
- d. Encouraging new commercial uses for vacant or derelict buildings, including historic buildings and buildings in rural areas subject to compliance with appropriate planning, wildlife legislation and service requirements; and
- e. Encouraging and supporting the sustainable development of new rural and farm-related enterprises, existing initiatives, innovation in indigenous enterprise (both high-tech and traditional) and on and off farm employment activities’.

Objective CDP8.12: ‘To support the implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), the Clare Wind Energy Strategy and the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy to facilitate the development of renewable energy developments in rural areas to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050 subject to the requirement of the RES SEA Environmental Report and the mitigation measures arising from the CDP Appropriate Assessment as contained in Volume 10(a)’.

Proposed Development’s Response to CDP Rural Development and Natural Resources:

The Proposed Development supports the reversal of rural decline and enables sustainable rural development and diversification by ensuring security of supply, which will enhance supply of renewable energy in the local area and support climate action and sustainability.

In addition, the site layout of the Proposed Development has been informed and guided by the findings and recommendations of the in-depth environmental assessments including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

5.2.7 CDP Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities:

Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities sets out the following strategic aims for the Plan period:

- To promote, encourage and facilitate physical, social and cultural inclusion throughout the County and across all communities;
- To ensure that the principles of accessible, inclusive and sustainable community development are central in all developments;
- To implement the community elements of the adopted Local Economic and Community Plan;
- To promote the creation of strong, vibrant neighbourhoods in the settlements of County Clare, each with a range of services and amenities which are easily accessible by local residents;
- To promote and support improved social and community infrastructure throughout the County; and
- To encourage, promote and facilitate active and inclusive participation in physical and social activities.

Objective CDP10.2: ‘It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To support the work of the Clare Local Community Development Committee;

- b. To work with the Clare Local Community Development Committee and all relevant stakeholders to seek investment in delivering the actions and stakeholder initiatives of the Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (and any subsequent Plan) so as to strengthen community infrastructure and promote social inclusion for all citizens across all our communities;
- c. To seek investment in initiatives that achieve the physical, economic, social, and environmental regeneration of disadvantaged areas in the County and the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area; and
- d. To support the development of an inter-agency Social Enterprise Strategy to support the retention and expansion of existing social enterprises and the development of new social enterprises.

Objective CDP10.3: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To actively engage with the Clare Public Participation Network in the preparation and implementation of this Plan and other local authorities' plans, policies and programmes to ensure that it represents and responds to the needs of the residents of County Clare; and
- b. To support the empowerment of individuals and groups in communities through volunteering and active citizen engagement.

Response to CDP Sustainable Communities:

The Proposed Development will include a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) for the life-time of the wind farm. The Community Report provides further details of how this fund will be administered in partnership with the local community. The Oatfield Wind Farm CBF will be managed in accordance with Department of Environment, Community and Climate Good Practice Principles Handbook for Community Benefit Funds (2012)³.

5.2.8 CDP Chapter 11: Physical Infrastructure and Energy:

CDP Chapter 11 sets out the policy objectives in relation to the continued growth and sustainable development of physical infrastructure and energy in the county at large. The section below looks at relevant policy for Shannon Foynes Port and Renewable Energy Sources.

Shannon Foynes Port - Chapter 11 of the CDP supports the continued growth of Shannon Foynes Port Company, Ireland's second largest port operation, which has statutory jurisdiction over all marine activities on a 500km² area on the Shannon Estuary, stretching from Kerry to Loop Head to Limerick City. The CDP highlights that it is a port of national and international significance with a 30-year *Masterplan Vision 2041*, which aims to double port throughput to 20m tonnes per annum over the Plan period.

Objective CDP11.23: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council:

³ <https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/community-benefit-funds/>

- a. To support the continued expansion of Shannon Foynes Port in compliance with the environmental requirements of Objective CDP3.3 as it applies to Co. Clare;
- b. To support the capital infrastructure projects in the Shannon-Foynes Port Company Infrastructure Development Programme;
- c. To support Shannon Foynes Port Company's Masterplan Vision 2041'.

It is proposed that the wind farm development and its component parts will be delivered via Shannon Foynes Port. As such, the turbine delivery routes (TDRs) are described in detail in the EIAR and CEMP.

Renewable Energy Sources - In addition to Clare CDP's new stand-alone Chapter 2 Climate Action, Chapter 11, Section 11.8.5 of the CDP highlights that the global climate is changing and increased levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases, which are attributable for the most part to the burning of fossil fuels, are accelerating this change. According to the Clare CDP, large scale renewable energy projects should '*seek to provide a community gain element in establishing such infrastructure in local areas as outlined in the Programme for Government*' (June 2020).

Clare CDP sets out an in-depth and detailed policy objectives to support renewable energy for the county at large, as follows:

Objective CDP11.47: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To encourage and to favourably consider proposals for renewable energy developments, including community owned developments, and ancillary facilities in order to meet National, Regional and County renewable energy targets, and to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy;
- b. To assess future renewable energy-related development proposals having regard to the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 in Volume 5 of this plan and associated SEA and AA;
- c. To support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (onshore and offshore) at appropriate locations and of its related grid infrastructure in County Clare, in accordance with all relevant policies, guidance and guidelines pertaining to the protection of the environment and protected habitats and species, and to assess proposals having regard to the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in Volume 6 of this plan and the associated SEA and AA, or any subsequent updated adopted Strategy and to national Wind Energy Guidelines;
- d. To prepare a new and updated Wind Energy Strategy for County Clare during the lifetime of this plan, subject to the publication of the update to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006;
- e. To strike an appropriate balance between facilitating renewable and wind energy-related development and protecting the residential amenities of neighbouring properties;
- f. To support and facilitate the development of new options and technological advances in relation to renewable energy production and storage, that may emerge over the lifetime of this Plan.

Response to CDP Physical Infrastructure and Energy:

The Proposed Development at Oatfield, Co. Clare has been designed to support the above CDP policies objectives in relation to Physical Infrastructure and Energy and is in accordance with the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) 2023-2029 and Clare Wind Energy Strategy (WES) 2023-2029.

5.2.9 CDP Chapter 14: Landscape:

Chapter 14 Landscape of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the objectives required to sustainably manage the diverse landscapes of County Clare. In accordance with the overall vision of the CDP, it is based on the following strategic aims:

- To ensure the implementation of the National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 in County Clare;
- To implement the 'Clare's Living Landscapes' approach to landscape management and enhancement throughout the County;
- To encourage the utilisation of the Clare County Landscape Character Assessment in both the preparation and assessment of planning applications;
- To utilise the 'Clare Living Landscapes' approach to ensure that development in the County takes place in the location / landscape deemed most appropriate; and
- To sustain the natural and cultural heritage of the County.

A review of the Clare CDP LCA section confirms that the Proposed Development at Oatfield, East Clare is located within the following Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs):

- Clare CDP Landscape Character Types (LCTs): Upland Hills
- Clare CDP Landscape Character Types (LCAs): No 8. Slieve Bernagh Uplands.

Clare Landscape Character Assessment (LCA, 2004) is a seminal landscape assessment of the county-at-large and was funded by the Heritage Council of Ireland in partnership with Clare County Council. Clare LCA is the baseline for the Clare RES 2023-2029 and Clare WES 2023-2029.

Objective CDP14.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA): It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To encourage the utilisation of the Landscape Character Assessment of County Clare, the forthcoming Regional Landscape Strategy and other relevant landscape policy and guidelines and to have regard to them in the facilitation, protection and management of appropriate landscape change in County Clare.
- b. To review and update the County Clare Landscape Strategy as soon as is practicable following the publication of the National Landscape Character Assessment and taking any associated guidelines.

In addition, Section 14.3 of the Clare CDP provides an overview of Clare's Living Landscapes. This section of the CDP states that, *'The word 'Landscape' is often regarded as a restrictive term that relates only to visual appearance with little regard to the needs of the communities and landowners that shape it. More positive and proactive policies have been sought that will provide support for the vitality of rural communities'*.

Response to CDP Landscape:

The EIAR of the Proposed Development and other associated Environmental Reports such as NIS, Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIAs) and Community Report have all utilised the Clare LCA and are underpinned by the landscape definitions, as set out in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The Proposed Development, which is set out in two clusters (Western & Eastern Development Areas), has been designed to integrate within the receiving landscape of East Clare. A in-depth Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA, **EIAR Chapter 14**) was undertaken to ensure that any impacts and/or potential changes to the character of existing views (including views from Scenic Routes and other important locations), the scale, massing and finishes of the wind farm development and the cumulative impact(s) are all considered, along with any necessary mitigation measures.

5.2.10 CDP Chapter 15 – Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:

In accordance with the overall Vision of the CDP, Chapter 15 is based on the following strategic aims:

- To conserve and protect sites which have been designated for their ecological or environmental sensitivity;
- To ensure the sustainable management and conservation of areas of natural and geological heritage within the County;
- To increase education about and awareness of our natural heritage and biodiversity;
- To promote sustainable development, in harmony with local biodiversity and, if possible, take steps to enhance the natural environment;
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive; and
- To promote the creation of an integrated and coherent green infrastructure network throughout County Clare in order to enhance connectivity, social inclusion, sense of place and the creation of wildlife corridors

Key biodiversity, natural heritage and green infrastructure objectives relevant to the wind farm proposal include:

Objective CDP15.2: Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Built Heritage Assets, states that ‘It is an objective of Clare County Council: To support initiatives that enhance and protect County Clare’s unique natural heritage, biodiversity and built heritage assets, recognising the contribution which education and outreach can play in developing understanding of biodiversity and heritage in our communities. Such initiatives should secure funding to support projects in the region in line with the National Biodiversity Action Plan’.

Objective CDP15.3: European Sites: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To afford the highest level of protection to all designated European sites in accordance with the relevant Directives and legislation on such matters;
- b. To require all planning applications for development that may have (or cannot rule out) likely significant effects on European Sites in view of the site's Conservation Objectives, either in isolation or in combination with other plans or projects, to submit a Natura Impact Statement in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended); and
- c. To recognise and afford appropriate protection to any new or modified Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) that are identified during the lifetime of this Development Plan through the planning application process bearing in mind proposals for development outside of a European site may also have an indirect effect'.

Objective CDP15.4: Requirement for Appropriate Assessment: *'It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

- a. To implement Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s); and
- b. To have regard to Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009 or any updated version'.

Response to CDP Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:

The Proposed Development has been designed in accordance with the CDP policy objectives for Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure and a NIS has been prepared and submitted as part of the planning application – refer to **EIAR Chapter 7 Biodiversity and EIAR Chapter 8 Birds and Planning Application Part 4 (Appropriate Assessment Reporting)**.

5.2.11 CDP Chapter 16 – Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage:

Chapter 16 of the CDP sets out the strategic aims relating to the conservation and management of the architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage of the county are based on the following strategic aims:

- To protect and enhance the character of the built environment by means of the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas;
- To enhance present and future environments by protecting the architectural heritage of the county and successfully integrating new development;
- To protect the archaeology resource in the county for both its intrinsic and tourism value;
- To promote and support cultural activities, facilities and services in County Clare; and
- To protect and enhance the vernacular built environment across the county.

Key policy objectives that are relevant to the proposals include:

Objective CDP16.1: Architectural Heritage: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a. To ensure the protection of the architectural heritage of County Clare through the identification of Protected Structures, the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas, the safeguarding of historic gardens, and the recognition of structures and elements that contribute positively to the vernacular and industrial heritage of the county; and
- b. To ensure that the archaeological and architectural heritage of the county is not damaged either through direct destruction or by unsympathetic developments.
- c. To support and promote architectural vernacular skills training and facilities in the county.

Objective CDP16.5: Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs): '*It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

- a. To ensure that new developments within or adjacent to an ACA respect the established character context of the area and contribute positively to the ACA in terms of design, scale, setting and material finishes;
- b. To protect from demolition or removal and non-sympathetic alterations, existing buildings, structures, groups of structures, sites, landscapes and features such as street furniture and paving, which are considered to be intrinsic elements of the special character of the ACA;
- c. To ensure that all new signage, lighting, advertising and utilities to buildings within an ACA are designed, constructed and located in a manner that does not detract from and is complementary to the character of the ACA; and
- d. To ensure that external colour schemes in ACAs enhance the character and amenities of the area and reflect traditional colour schemes.

Objective CDP16.11 Archaeology and Infrastructure Schemes: 'It is an objective of Clare County Council: To ensure that decisions relating to development (including infrastructure associated with broadband, telecommunications, renewable energy, major road/ rail infrastructure, flood relief schemes and other services), which may have implications for Recorded Archaeological Monuments/Sites, Zones of Archaeological Potential or undiscovered archaeology, are informed by an appropriate level of archaeological investigation undertaken by qualified persons and the case of flood relief schemes have regard to archaeological Guidelines for Flood Relief Schemes (DHLGH and OPW2022)'.
'

Proposed Development's Response to Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

The Proposed Development supports the conservation and management of architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage in Co. Clare, as set out in **Chapter 15 of the EIAR**.

The Proposed Development supports the delivery of these CDP objectives through its detailed design and layout in two key locations (Western & Eastern Development Areas) along with the provisions of the Community Report and planned Community Benefit Fund. For example, there are two ACAs in the wider area (Sixmilebridge and Kilkeshin), which were assessed in the EIAR and it is envisaged that these ACAs will benefit from the Oatfield Community Benefit Fund.

Clare CDP Volume 5: Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 (RES):

Clare RES 2023-2029 outlines the renewable energy resource that is deliverable in County Clare. Its Vision, consistent with that of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, is ‘to position the County as the national leader in renewable energy generation, supporting energy efficiency and conservation, with an accessible modern telecommunications infrastructure, achieving balanced social and economic development and assisting Ireland’s Climate Action Plan’.

The Clare RES provides information on the Energy and Emission Performance in 2020 and Progress and Outlook in specific sectors including Wind Energy, which is reproduced below.

Table 5-3: Clare RES Emission Progress and Outlook

Clare RES	Progress to Date	Outlook to 2030
<i>Wind Energy (onshore)</i>	Significant progress (153MW installed). Still fell short of original target of 500MW installed capacity.	<i>A coherent Wind Energy Strategy (WES) has been useful. A review of the WES will enable future growth to be managed (to be undertaken when new wind energy guidance is issued).</i>

According to **Section 6** of the CDP Volume 5: Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029, the Clare Wind Energy Strategy (Interim Version, April 2023) facilitates the development of onshore wind farms by maximising the wind resources of the County, having regard to technological advances in turbine design, information on wind speeds, proximity and availability to grid connection and to changing energy and grid connection regulations while minimising any environmental and visual impacts.

Section 6.3: Onshore Wind (The Strategy) of the County Clare RES 2023-2029 identifies sites of strategic regional and national importance that have the potential to accommodate wind energy development. The Strategy designates areas as being either a) Strategic, b) Acceptable in Principle, c) Open for Consideration or d) Not normally Permissible, for wind energy development.

Proposed Development’s Response to Clare Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) 2023-2029

The Proposed Development is located in an area designated by the CDP as a ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development. Ten turbines (**T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9 & T10**) are located within this designated Strategic Area and one turbine (**T4**) is located in an area designated ‘Acceptable in Principle’, on the southern edge of the Strategic Area for wind development.

The objective for the *Strategic Areas* (WES8) states that these areas are ‘*eminently suitable for wind farm development and notes their good/excellent wind resource, access to grid, distance from properties and location outside designated sites*’. A target of 400MW from these areas is identified. The objective for the *Acceptable in Principle* areas (WES9) states that these areas are considered suitable for wind farm development and notes their sufficient wind speeds, access to grid and established patterns of inquiries.

Section 6.6 Policy of the Clare RES states that the existing Wind Energy Strategy for County Clare is incorporated into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Volume 6) and forms the policy basis for onshore wind development in the County.

Section 6.6 Policy also states that the planning authority is committed to reviewing the WES once the new Section 28 National Wind Energy Guidelines are finalised and issued. The Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 states that, *'When reviewing the Wind Energy Strategy, Clare County Council will take account of all relevant factors including: Landscape capacity and visual impacts, including cumulative impacts; Potential of repowering for existing wind farms, including relevant environmental considerations; Technological advances in wind and other forms of renewable electricity generation'*.

The existing Wind Energy Strategy for County Clare is incorporated into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Volume 6) and forms the policy basis for onshore wind development in the County, as discussed in the following section.

Clare CDP Volume 6: Clare Wind Energy Strategy 2023-2029 (WES)

Section 1 Introduction of the WES states that it is a key priority, given the wind resource in County Clare, to identify sites of strategic regional and national importance that have the potential to accommodate wind energy development. The WES 2023-2029 built on the original WES 2005, which was based on the Clare Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). [The current WES 2023-2029 has been carried forward from the 2011-2017 CDP.]

According to the Clare CDP WES, *'a balance is now sought between achieving greater energy security, achieving commitments at national and international level regarding reductions in greenhouse gases, promoting renewable energy and other environmental considerations'*.

The location of the Proposed Development at Oatfield and Goracullin, in relation to the provisions of the Clare CDP Wind Energy Strategy (WES) is illustrated in **Figure 5-1**. Also, Chapter 3.3. of the Clare CDP WES sets out specific area objectives including WES Eight: 'Strategic Areas' and Clare CDP WES Nine: 'Acceptable in Principle' as follows:

Clare CDP WES 2023-2029 'Strategic Areas' and 'Acceptable in Principle'

Clare CDP WES Eight 'Strategic Areas': These key areas are considered to be eminently suitable for wind farm development and are of strategic importance because of:

- Good / excellent wind resources
- Access to grid
- Distance from properties and
- Outside any Natura 2000 sites

Projects within these areas must:

- Demonstrate conformity with existing and approved wind farms to avoid visual clutter.
- Be designed and developed in line with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2006) in terms of siting, layout and environmental studies.
- Provide a Habitats Directive Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitat Regulations if the site is located in close proximity to a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area.
- Be developed in a comprehensive manner avoiding the piecemeal development of the areas designated as 'strategic'.

Target wind energy generation from strategic areas is 400 MW.

Clare CDP WES Nine: 'Acceptable in Principle' These areas are considered suitable for wind farm development because of:

- Sufficient wind speeds,
- Access to grid network, and
- Established patterns of inquiries.

Projects within these areas must:

- Demonstrate conformity with existing and approved wind farms to avoid visual clutter.
- Designed and developed in line with the Planning Guidelines in terms of siting, layout and environmental studies.
- Provide a Habitats Directive Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitat Regulations if situated in proximity to a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area will require.

Target wind energy generation from Acceptable in Principle areas is 150 MW.

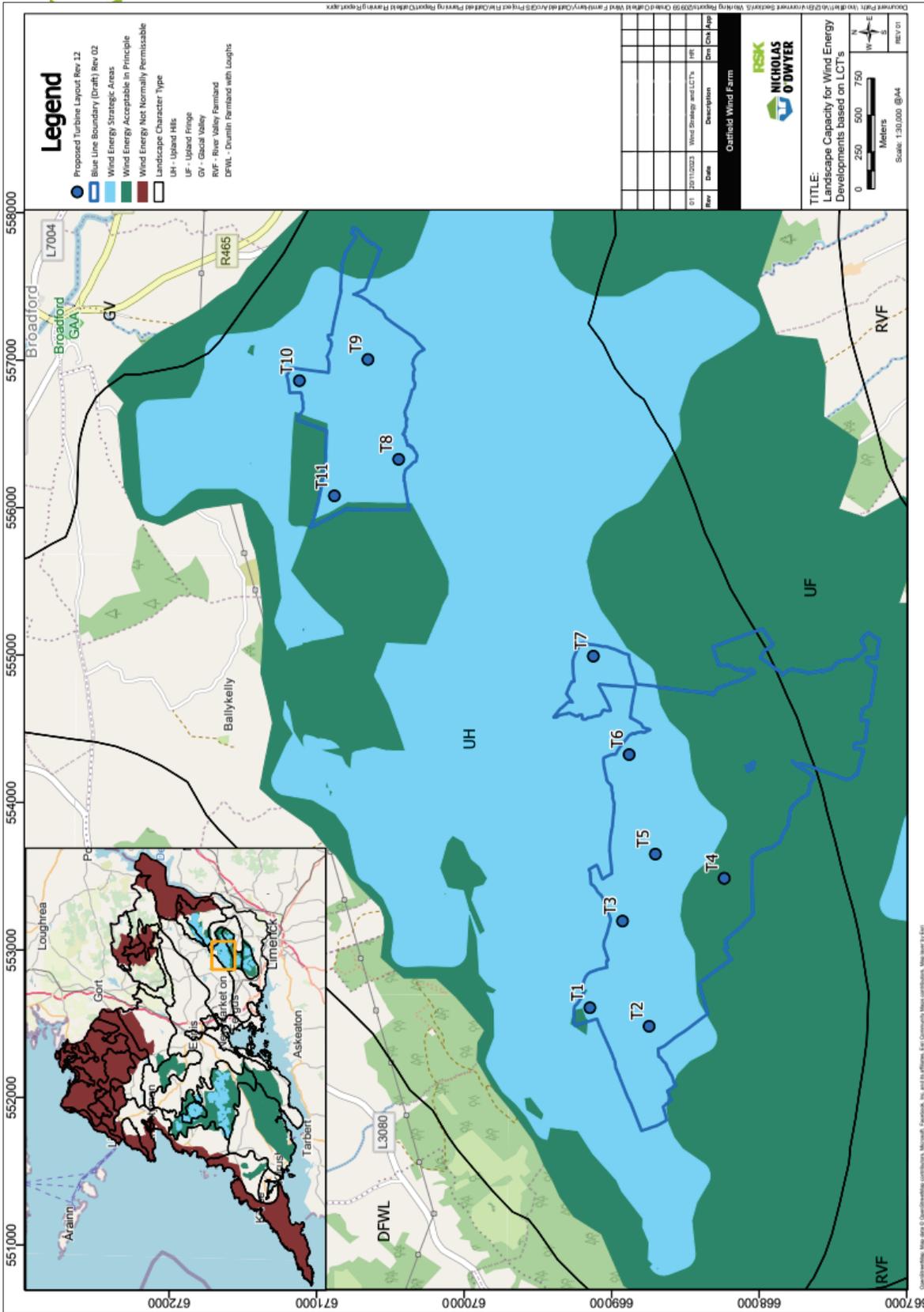


Figure 5-1: 'Strategic Areas' and 'Acceptable in Principle' Areas for Wind Energy Development

5.3 Draft Clare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029

As noted above, the Proposed Development and its associated community benefit fund (CBF) aims to support the delivery of a number of existing and emerging plans in the East Clare area including the draft Clare Local and Economic Community Plan (LECP).

The Draft Clare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023 – 2029 will shape the future sustainable development of Clare over the next six years. At the time of preparing this Planning Report, the Draft Clare LECP was at the important public consultation phase. The Plan aims to make Co. Clare an even better place in which to live, work and visit by creating new opportunities, improving connectivity between rural and urban areas, and by protecting and enhancing services in the community.

The Draft Clare LECP is a crucial community plan designed to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life for everyone in County Clare. This includes not only the residents, but also those who work, invest, or visit the area. The dLECP outlines the high-level Goals and actions for economic and community development within the county over a six-year period, taking into account the needs and aspirations of its diverse population. The Plan has six high-level Goals, as follows:

Table 5-4: Relevant draft Clare LECP Goals

Goal	Description
Goal 1:	<i>Healthy, Equitable, inclusive County</i>
Goal 2:	<i>Life-long Learning and Training</i>
Goal 3:	<i>A County with vibrant Retail Industry, Agriculture, Marine, Tourism & Culture Sectors</i>
Goal 4:	<i>Enhance economic, cultural & social opportunity</i>
Goal 5:	<i>Sustainable and resilient County</i>
Goal 6:	<i>Diverse Innovative County</i>

For example, **Goal 6 Objective: 6.5 of the draft Clare Local Economic and Community Plan:** *‘To support a collaborative, collective and coordinated approach to local economic and community development in the County, eliminating duplication and promoting partnership in the delivery of projects/initiatives to deliver economies of scale’.*

The Proposed Development’s Community Benefit Fund (CBF) will enable and empower local community groups to have full autonomy on deciding where the Fund is to be invested annually on local community development projects. Local community groups will also be able to achieve the objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and the high-level Goals of the emerging Clare Local Economic and Community Plan, through the delivery of Community Benefit funded-projects. In addition, the investment created by the Community Benefit Fund has the potential to make a significant contribution to enhancing and strengthening the overall sense of place, sense of belonging and well-being of the local community in East Clare.

Overall, the Proposed Development will support the enhancement of the competitiveness of rural areas and facilitates the development and diversification of the rural economy by supporting the renewable energy sector and increasing the share of renewables in Ireland's energy mix.

5.4 Conclusions on Regional and Local Planning Policy

In summary, the Proposed Development in East Clare has been conceptualised, designed and laid out, in accordance and in alignment with both the regional spatial and economic strategy and local planning policy for the county-at-large, as set out in the sections above. The renewable wind energy project is of both regional and local economic and social importance, as it will strengthen the competitiveness, vibrancy and viability of a rural area in East Clare and support climate action at a regional level. The proposal also facilitates the sustainable development and diversification of the rural economy by supporting the overall renewable energy sector ensuring energy sustainability and thereby increasing the share of renewables in Ireland's overall energy mix, as per regional and local policy and goals.

The Proposed Development also supports the reversal of rural decline and enables sustainable rural development by ensuring the security of supply and energy sustainability to support investment and enterprise, which will also enhance the overall renewable energy sector in the wider region. The Proposed Project supports the enhancement of the competitiveness of rural areas and facilitates the development and diversification of the rural economy by supporting the renewable energy sector. During the construction phase, additional employment will be created in County Clare and the wider region through the supply of local services and materials to the Proposed Development.

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 has renewable energy generation at its core along with ambitious actions to combat climate change. The Proposed Development promotes the generation of renewable energy at an appropriate location for wind energy, as per the County Development Plan 2023-2029, the Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) and the Wind Energy Strategy (WES). In line with the RES, WES and Clare LCA (2004, funded by Heritage Council), the Proposed Development is located in a designated 'Strategic Area' and 'Acceptable in Principle' area for wind energy development.

Clearly, the proposed onshore wind farm development and associated Community Benefit Fund (CBF), which will operate during the life time of the project, will support the delivery of the above stated policy objectives for County Clare.

In conclusion, the local and regional policy context for the site and surrounding area is considered highly-favourable for the Proposed Development, particularly in relation to renewable energy provision and renewable electricity targets for the near future. At a local level, the Proposed Development has the ability to avoid adverse impacts on the receiving environment, as detailed throughout the accompanying EIAR and NIS, and will provide significant benefits to the economic offering of the area along with financial benefit to the local and wider community.

The Proposed Development in Co. Clare will help address the rising demand for electricity resulting from an increased population and renewed economic growth in the county and wider region. The Proposed Development will also create a wide range of socio-economic and cultural benefits for the local economy in the short, medium and long term, focused around climate action, indigenous renewable energy and will ultimately contribute to the creation of a low carbon economy and resilient county, region and country.

6 KEY ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

6.1 Introduction

This section of the Planning Report addresses the key environmental considerations and receptors associated with the proposed development with reference, as relevant, to the documentation submitted in support of the planning application. It presents a review of the environmental issues pertaining to the proposals through its design and preparation of the EIA Report, and following application of mitigation measures prescribed, the significance of any residual effects which are a consideration in the planning balance. Detailed assessment is presented in the EIA Report and the Non Technical Summary presents the findings in summary.

The key environmental issues relevant to the Proposed Development include:

- Biodiversity;
- Shadow flicker;
- Noise and vibration;
- Landscape and visual amenity;
- Archaeology and cultural heritage;
- Cumulative Effects; and
- Appropriate Assessment (EU Birds and Natural Habitats Directives)

6.2 Biodiversity

The biodiversity desktop and field surveys identified key ecological features (KEFs) for assessment of potential impacts arising from the Proposed Development. These KEFs included:

- European sites: specifically Lower River Shannon SAC, Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC, Ratty River Caves SAC, and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA;
- Nationally designated sites with ornithological interest features, notably Gortacullin Bog NHA;
- Important Bird Areas (IBAs) specifically Shannon and Fergus Estuaries IBA;
- Habitats: notably heath and bog, grassland and scrub, woodland, treelines, hedgerows and drainage ditches;
- Plant species;
- Invasive non-native plant species:
- Invertebrate species: namely, Marsh Fritillary (butterfly);
- Amphibian and reptile species:
- Terrestrial mammal species: namely Otter, Badger, Pine Marten, Red Squirrel and Irish Hare;
- Bats;

- Aquatic species; and
- Birds: notably, Hen Harrier, Kestrel, other raptor species, Red Grouse, Woodcock, waders and passerines.

The assessment was carried out taking into consideration embedded mitigation, and the following significant effects were identified:

- During construction: direct loss and fragmentation of habitats, including habitats of value to Marsh Fritillary and bat species; disturbance and displacement of passerines, Red Grouse, Hen Harrier, Woodcock, Kestrel, and other raptor species; and the spread of invasive non-native plant species.
- During operation: bat mortality through turbine collisions and baropressure effects; and the spread of invasive non-native plant species.
- During decommissioning: spread of invasive non-native plant species.

Additional mitigation and enhancement measures were proposed to avoid these significant effects and deliver enhancements for Key Ecological Features and other wildlife.

During construction, these include:

- Development of a detailed Invasive Species Management Plan;
- Retainment of areas of more important habitat within the landscape design (e.g., bog, heath, higher quality grassland/woodland/scrub);
- Minimisation of the extent of habitat loss during construction wherever possible;
- Selection of delivery routes which use existing built infrastructure wherever possible, with laying of cables underground;
- Presence of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) to oversee any ecological issues during construction; and
- Species Habitat Management Plan (SHMP) that includes additional measures including direction on habitat reinstatement and creation. Creation and enhancement is proposed for heath and bog, grassland, scrub and hedgerows, and conifer plantation. A net increase in habitat will exceed the predicted loss and result in significant biodiversity enhancement. The SHMP also focuses on delivering mitigation and enhancements for Red Grouse and Hen Harrier.

During operation, in order to minimise loss of bats due to collision, additional mitigation will include clearance of suitable habitat within a fixed distance of each turbine tower, reducing the likelihood of bats flying through/near operational turbines. Habitats within the wider area will be retained and enhanced for bats, and managed sympathetically for bats and other species to provide significant biodiversity enhancement. Monitoring will also be implemented to identify any bat fatalities; the findings of which will be used to inform any additional mitigation requirements.

Habitat reinstatement will also be carried out during decommissioning for any habitat that is cleared during this phase and subsequent monitoring will be carried out to inform any need for additional intervention such as additional planting.

The findings of the EIAR deemed that these mitigation and enhancement measures will avoid significant residual effects on the Key Ecological Features identified. Habitat monitoring, bat fatalities, and bird population monitoring is also proposed.

6.3 Shadow flicker

An assessment of the potential shadow flicker effects from the turbines in the Proposed Development is presented in EIAR **Chapter 12**. Shadow flicker is the effect that occurs where the blades of a wind turbine cast a shadow over a window in a nearby house, and the rotation of the blades causes the shadow to flick on and off. This effect happens only in certain specific combined circumstances. At distances greater than 10 rotor diameters (the width of the circle the wind turbine blades make) from a wind turbine, the potential for shadow flicker to occur is very low.

The shadow flicker assessment for the Proposed Development was undertaken following consultation with the Clare County Council Planning Authority and considering current legislation and guidance.

A database of potential sensitive receptors was compiled. This database identifies sensitive receptors within 2km of each of the proposed turbines, and therefore covers the 10 times rotor diameter (1,500m) study area defined for this assessment. The sensitive receptors identified within the study area include occupied and unoccupied dwellings (excluding dilapidated properties), planning permission sites (validated and granted up to the cut-off date of 27th September 2023), and a school. Modelling was carried out to predict the worst case shadow flicker effect at all sensitive receptors identified within the study area. The 'worst-case' scenario assumes that:

- The sun is shining from sunrise to sunset (cloudless sky);
- The turbine blades are turning 100% of the time;
- The turbine rotor is oriented directly between the sun and the sensitive receptor; and
- There is no screening between the turbine and the receptor (excluding topography).

Shadow flicker can only occur when the blades of a wind turbine are moving. This means that the turbine needs to be installed and operational. Because of this, shadow flicker effects can only occur during operation of the Proposed Development.

There are 87 sensitive receptors within the 10-rotor diameter (1,500m) study area. One further sensitive receptor (ID 88) was found approximately 7.5m outside the 10-rotor diameter (1,500m) study area.

The results of the analysis for the 'worst-case' scenario show that of the 88 sensitive receptors within the (1,500m) study area, 25 are predicted to experience no shadow flicker and 49 are predicted to experience shadow flicker that exceeds the thresholds of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day.

6.4 Noise and Vibration

An assessment of the potential noise and vibration effects of the proposed Project on local residential amenity is presented in EIAR **Chapter 13**. The baseline noise environment was surveyed to determine typical background noise levels in the vicinity of the noise sensitive

receptors in closest proximity to the site. The noise monitoring exercise was conducted between 13/09/2023 to 19/10/2023 at six locations.

The assessment identified the following effects:

- During construction: noise from most construction activities has been assessed and is predicted to result in temporary negligible to minor adverse effects which are not significant. However, HDD drilling at night could represent a short-term major temporary reversible adverse effect, which is significant, in the absence of further mitigation.
- During operation:
 - Noise from turbines: The detailed assessment presented in the EIAR demonstrates that predicted noise levels comply with the noise limits derived from the baseline survey at all properties and all locations. This assumed the use of a reduced noise operational mode (“SO2”) for turbines 2 and 4 of the Proposed Development. For other turbine models, different operational restrictions (or none at all) may be required to achieve a similar conclusion. This means that the operational noise levels from the Proposed Development are considered acceptable in line with relevant guidelines. This therefore represents a long-term permanent reversible adverse effect which is not significant.
 - Noise from substation: The main noise sources associated with the substation are likely to be the power transformers and their cooling fans. Given the separation distance of 580m between the substation and the nearest non-involved residential properties, the associated noise levels at these properties will be of less than 30dB L_{Aeq} due to separation distances involved. This would be below the most stringent noise limit of 35dB L_{Aeq} recommended in relevant guidance for classified installations, even accounting for the potential character of the noise. The noise effects are thus considered acceptable in line with relevant guidelines. This therefore represents a long-term reversible adverse effect which is not significant.
- During decommissioning: Decommissioning is likely to result in less noise than during construction, due to the reduced amount of activity and traffic likely to be involved, and would also not involve HDD drilling out of hours in particular. This phase of the Proposed Development would therefore be associated with short-term minor temporary reversible adverse effects at most which is not significant.

Mitigation measures will include:

- During construction (and similarly for decommissioning), activity will comply with general measures as outlined in BS:5228-1 for the reduction of construction noise and vibration levels at source. Most construction activities will be restricted to the hours of 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays, excluding those unlikely to produce substantial noise levels, such as turbine deliveries or concrete pours, or as otherwise agreed with Clare County Council. Additionally, the following will be implemented:
 - HDD drilling works to be undertaken during standard day-time hours where possible and completed in the shortest practical timescale.
 - Use of Best Practical Means to minimise noise generation at nearest residents, including use of quiet drilling/pumping equipment and/or temporary noise barriers

installed around trenchless compounds in order to provide screening for sources located at low heights.

- The closest local residents (within 200m of the HDD works) will be kept informed of the likely period during which the work will take place, the times and durations of planned works, measures that are being taken to avoid unnecessary noise and following completion of the works.
- During operation, selection of turbine will be on the basis of ensuring that noise levels at sensitive receptors are as per EIAR predictions for no significant effects.

Residual effects, following implementation of mitigation measures include:

- Construction phase: Potential noise impacts of out-of-hours HDD drilling would be reduced to a minor magnitude. Effects from construction activities in general will be negligible to minor short-term temporary reversible adverse and therefore not significant.
- Operational phase: At some locations under some wind conditions and for a certain proportion of the time, noise from the Proposed Development may be audible; however, operational noise emission levels are acceptable in terms of the relevant guidance for the assessment of wind farm noise. This therefore represents a long-term reversible adverse effect which is not significant.
- Decommissioning phase: Decommissioning would still be associated with minor short-term temporary reversible adverse effects at most which is not significant.

Noise monitoring will also be carried out in line with permit conditions.

6.5 Landscape and visual amenity

Chapter 14 of the EIAR defines the existing landscape and visual baseline environments; assesses their sensitivity to change; describes the key landscape and visual related aspects of the proposed development within a 20 km study area. It describes the nature of the anticipated changes and assesses the effects arising during construction, operation and decommissioning. The assessment findings have been informed by desk study, visualisations, and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) studies and a number of site visits.

From early-stage constraint studies, baseline assessments and fieldwork investigation specific to the Proposed Development, some of the most susceptible physical landscape receptors within the study area are considered to be the lakelands located throughout the northern extent of the central study area, the uplands in the northern extent of the wider study area and Lough Derg and the River Shannon corridor in the eastern and southern extents of the study area. Whilst there is some sensitivity associated with the elevated lands in the surrounds of the site and in the southern aspect of the central study area, this comprises a notable utilitarian character due to the extensive areas of conifer forestry, numerous major routes and telecommunication towers and radar equipment (Woodcock Hill).

With regard to visual receptors, the most sensitive visual receptors in this instance are considered to be the local residential receptors located in the immediate vicinity of the development located along the sloping landscape north and south of the site. The settlement of Broadford is a notable visual receptor in this instance due to its proximity to the northern aspect of the development and as a result of its relatively pleasant and contained location situated along the valley of the Broadford

River. Other sensitive visual receptors within the central study area also include users of the East Clare Way and areas that present with a strong sense of amenity, such as Doon Lough. The central and wider study area also encompasses numerous scenic view designations (identified in the current Clare, Tipperary and Limerick County Development Plan), whilst other sensitive heritage receptors within the wider study area include Bunratty Castle and King Johns Castle, located in the southern half of the wider study area.

In terms of mitigation measures:

- Construction phase: No specific mitigation measures to be implemented.
- Operational phase: Mitigation is by avoidance and design and buffering of residential receptors.
 - Design measures will include ensuring a standard off-white/light grey semi-matt non-reflective finish; underground electricity lines; preservation of features of interest in the landscape; avoidance of counter rotation of blade sets; and avoiding removal of vegetation as far as possible.
 - Setback distance of 720m from residential receptors.

The significance of residual landscape effects for each phase (i.e., construction, operation and decommissioning) was considered to be Substantial-Moderate / Negative / Long-term within and immediately around the site. At increasing distances, significance is described as Moderate, Slight and Imperceptible as the Proposed Development becomes a progressively smaller component of the wider landscape fabric even in the context of higher sensitivity landscape units / features.

Twenty-six viewpoints were identified for assessment that represented local community views, views presenting tourism, amenity and heritage features, designated views, views from centres of population, and views from major routes. Visual effects during construction were considered to be not significant.

The findings of the assessment note that the elevated landscape context is heavily influenced by existing conifer forest plantations, overhead electrical infrastructure development and more typical rural land uses. The overall assessment considered that the scale of the turbines is well assimilated in this landscape context, and the turbines do not present with any strong sense of overbearing at even the nearest local receptors. Thus, it is not considered that, overall, the Proposed Development will result in significant visual impacts. **Appendix 14.1** presents the assessment from each viewpoint. The significance of effects range from imperceptible to substantial moderate.

6.6 Archaeology & Cultural Heritage

Chapter 15 of the EIAR assesses potential effects of the Proposed Development on the surrounding archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage landscape. The assessment is based on both a desktop review of the available cultural heritage and archaeological data and a comprehensive programme of field walking of the site.

Potential effects were assessed on archaeology and cultural heritage.

There are no World Heritage Sites, National Monuments, Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), Protected Structures or NIAH Structures recorded on the wind farm site (i.e., wind turbine locations, spoil storage areas, compound areas, substation areas) or site access track. Therefore, the Proposed Development will have a neutral direct effect on these types of heritage assets.

There is one recorded monument within the Site. A Megalithic wedge tomb (52) is recorded 286m east of T9 and 106 m south of the nearest internal access track. During construction, embedded mitigation has been carried out in the design phase of the development to ensure that no groundworks are required in the vicinity of this recorded monument. In addition, a buffer zone of 50m around this monument has been put in place. No groundworks, construction vehicle movements or storage of spoil or material is to be permitted within this buffer zone. With this embedded mitigation, it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a neutral effect on this recorded monument.

The potential effect of the Proposed Development on upstanding field boundaries, unregistered historical structures, and the widening of an access track that had historical use as a cattle droveway are considered not significant. A potential Significant to Profound effect was identified in association with the proposed groundworks to be carried out as part of the Proposed Development on unknown buried archaeological remains to be preserved in situ.

No significant effects were identified from construction of the Grid Connection Route (GCR) and Turbine Delivery Route.

During operation, the potential impact on the landscape setting of Bunratty Castle (a National Monument located just over 10km southwest of the nearest turbine) was considered to be of slight significance. Potential effects on the setting of Architectural Conservation Areas were identified to be not significant. The effect on the setting of structures identified the follow:

- Imperceptible effect on the Church of Mother of God, Glenmora House, St Mary's Church, Glebe House and Mount levers House.
- Slight effect on Kilkishen Castle and Kilkishen House.
- Moderate effect on Hurdlestown House, Belvoir House, Mountcashel House, St Vincent de Paul Church Oatfield.
- Moderate effect on Belvoir House.
- Range of Imperceptible to Moderate effect on the setting of fourteen buildings or structures recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) within a 5km study area.

In addition to the embedded measures mentioned above, mitigation measures proposed to reduce significance of effects as relevant include the following:

- Upstanding historic field boundaries within the site will be preserved in situ wherever possible. If a section of a historic field boundary must be removed to facilitate the construction then a representative cross-section of the boundary will be investigated and recorded by a suitably qualified archaeologist prior to removal.
- All major sub-surface groundworks associated with the proposed development construction works (wind turbine, 110kV substation location, compound locations, spoil storage areas and construction of new sections of access track, GCR and TDR) will be subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring.

No significant residual effects were identified.

6.7 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects were assessed for each environmental factor as relevant. The findings of note are summarised hereunder.

- Biodiversity
 - Cumulative effects on habitats were assessed. Loss and fragmentation of habitats was considered not significant; habitat disturbance and pollution will not result in significant effects with embedded mitigation.
 - Cumulative effects on species through habitat loss and fragmentation was assessed. It was considered that with embedded mitigation, cumulative effects on plant species, Marsh Fritillary, reptiles and amphibians, terrestrial mammals (excluding bats) and aquatic species are considered not significant.
 - Regarding potential cumulative effects on bats, the assessment considers that the constraints-led design approach has minimised the risk of disturbance, displacement and reduced habitat extent/connectivity. Significant cumulative effects through these impact pathways are not anticipated. Refer to **Chapter 7 Biodiversity** of the EIAR for further detail. A monitoring programme is also proposed.
 - EIAR **Chapter 8 Ornithology** identified that for species with relatively larger home ranges and/or that commute long distances (e.g., raptors and waders), there is a cumulative collision risk. Results obtained from surveys carried out indicate that the Proposed Development is not situated along any regular commuting routes for birds. Kestrel was identified as being at risk of potentially significant effects with other wind farm developments. This species is relatively sedentary within the Proposed Development and adjacent land, reducing the likelihood of cumulative effects with other projects. Wider areas of suitable habitat for Kestrel and the other Key Ornithological Features will be retained within and adjacent to the Proposed Development, and the avoidance of any cumulative effects will be further assisted by adoption of the Species and Habitats Management Plan. Thus, significant cumulative displacement/barrier and collision risk effects are not anticipated.
- Hydrology and Hydrogeology
 - No significant cumulative effects were identified for hydrology and hydrogeology. **Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** identified that in the event of a pollution incident (e.g., as a result of an accidental spill), the incident will likely be minor and temporary and therefore it will be unlikely to contribute significantly to cumulative effects in the associated surface water network.
 - Given that potential effects of the Proposed Development on hydrogeology are likely to be localised due to the overlying peat, slow recharge rates, high run-off rates and poor yielding underlying groundwater aquifer except for local zones, the Development is not considered likely to significantly contribute to cumulative effects.

- Land, Soils and Geology
 - Residual cumulative effects from other nearby Wind Farms in terms of land take which is generally localised can be determined to have a slight residual effect provided mitigation measures are implemented and monitored in line with the relevant guidelines and legislation.
- Shadow Flicker
 - Potential cumulative effects were identified with the adjacent pre-planning Knockshanvo wind farm. The 10-rotor diameter study area of the proposed Knockshanvo overlaps with that of the Proposed Development. A cumulative shadow flicker assessment was therefore carried out, whereby the turbines of both the Proposed Development and the Knockshanvo proposal were considered. In the absence of mitigation measures, it is considered that the cumulative shadow flicker that would be experienced at the identified receptors is significant and adverse. Mitigation measures to address cumulative shadow flicker will include the adoption of a shadow flicker control system to be operated to curtail Oatfield turbines should they, in combination with Knockshanvo turbines, result in exceedances of adopted Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) thresholds of 30 minutes per day, or 30 hours per year. The control system can be used to detect and mitigate instances of shadow flicker at any sensitive receptor if required. As a result, no significant residual cumulative effects will remain as predicted in **EIAR Chapter 12 Shadow Flicker**.
- Noise and Vibration
 - A cumulative operational assessment was carried out with the pre-planning Knockshanvo wind farm. The assessment demonstrates that predicted cumulative operational levels do not exceed the derived noise limits, with some negligible exceptions which would be unlikely to arise in practice. Therefore, cumulative noise levels would still likely represent a long-term reversible adverse effect which is not significant.
- Landscape and Visual
 - In considering cumulative effects, the findings indicate that there will be a clear reduction in the potential for isolated views of the Proposed Development. Overall, **Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual** identified that should all of the proposed developments within the study area be permitted and constructed, it is considered that the Proposed Development will contribute to a cumulative effect in the order of High-medium in the potential future baseline scenario.
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
 - **EIAR Chapter 15 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** considers the cultural heritage landscape in its cumulative assessment and refers to the findings in **EIAR Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual**. According to the assessment, there will be no additional cumulative indirect effect on the setting of World Heritage Sites or National Monuments. The overall likely cumulative effect on the settings of all Architectural Conservation Areas, Protected Structures and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Sites is likely to be moderate adverse (an effect that alters

the character of the historic environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends). The overall likely cumulative effect on Recorded Monuments will be neutral. The overall likely cumulative effect on unregistered buildings, earthworks and field boundaries of heritage interest will be slight adverse (an effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the historic environment without affecting its sensitivities). A cumulative effect is predicted during the construction phase of the GCR as the Carrowngowan Wind Farm Project's GCR will intersect that of the Proposed Development for a length of approximately 150m along the R471. During the operational phase, it is considered that there will be no additional cumulative indirect effect on the setting of World Heritage Sites or National Monuments. The overall likely cumulative effect on the settings of all Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), Protected Structures and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Sites is likely to be Significant. The overall likely cumulative effect on Recorded Monuments will likely remain neutral. The overall likely cumulative effect on unregistered buildings, earthworks and field boundaries of heritage interest may be moderate adverse. This will primarily be due to potential cumulative loss of unregistered upland field boundaries, trackways and currently unknown buried archaeology in the locations of the windfarm developments. Any adverse significant effects identified on the settings of heritage assets would be reversed by the decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Mitigation measures will include:

- 50m Buffer around the monument and a visual barrier to be erected demarcating the extent of the buffer zone on the ground during the construction phase;
 - Preservation in situ. Buffer to be placed around these historic buildings and visual barrier to be erected demarcating the extent of the buffer zone on the ground during construction;
 - Photographic and written recording of the features prior to removal.
 - Licensed archaeological monitoring of any open cut trenching outside of the existing modern public road and also along the section of the public road adjacent to the St Vincent de Paul Church recorded monument. Field boundaries should be preserved in situ where possible and the cable trench for off road sections should be aligned through existing gaps of field boundaries to minimize loss of field boundaries.
 - Preservation in situ of historic bridge.
 - Licensed archaeological monitoring of groundworks across this bridge.
- Traffic and Transportation
 - The Fahybeg Onshore wind farm was identified as potentially resulting in cumulative effects on traffic and transportation with the Proposed Development. Whilst there would be an increase in traffic resulting from the cumulative schemes during each stage of the project, overall, there are no significant effects anticipated as a result of the cumulative impacts and therefore no mitigation is proposed.

- Air Quality
 - The phasing/commencement of any other permitted developments in the locality could potentially result in the scenario where a number of other construction sites are in operation at the same time as the Proposed Development. The IAQM construction phase methodology states that beyond 250m from a site boundary, the risk of impact from activities carried out on-site during the construction phase can be considered to be negligible. All permitted developments are expected to agree and follow site specific Construction Environmental Management Plans or Dust Management Plans and Construction Traffic Management Plans that will adequately control emissions from construction. **Chapter 17 Air Quality** identifies that there are no significant residual cumulative effects at any of the project phases.
- Climate
 - As identified in EIAR **Chapter 18 Climate**, the Proposed Development makes an important contribution to securing the quick deployment required by the Republic of Ireland's Government's emissions reductions ambitions for 2030. The Proposed Development also assists in meeting the Republic of Ireland's Government's target of securing an overall ambition of 8GW of installed onshore wind capacity in the Republic of Ireland by 2030, as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2021: Securing Our Future. Any other wind-based energy generation projects in Clare County Council and the Republic of Ireland would be highly likely to result in total emissions savings by offsetting fossil fuel contributions to grid electricity. The GHG savings would thus outweigh total losses and the cumulative effects from these existing and potential wind farm developments would be Significantly Beneficial, contributing towards climate change mitigation.

6.8 Appropriate Assessment (EU Birds and Natural Habitats Directives)

6.8.1 Stage 1 Assessment

Screening of SACs in relation to the Proposed Development identified the presence of potential impact pathways between the Proposed Development and designated features of the following SACs, which are therefore considered further within this NIS:

- Lower River Shannon SAC [002165];
- Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC [000030]; and
- Ratty River Cave SAC [002316].

Likely Significant Effects on the following 7 SACs were screened out and therefore did not require further assessment in relation to the Proposed Development:

- Glenomra Wood SAC [001013];
- Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC [002312];
- Lough Gash Turlough SAC [000051];
- Kilkishen House SAC [002319];

- Poulmagordon Cave (Quin) SAC [000064];
- Old Domestic Building (Keevagh) SAC [002010];
- Newgrove House SAC [002157]].

Screening of SPAs in relation to the Proposed Development identified the presence of potential impact pathways between the Proposed Development and the following SPAs, which are therefore considered further within this NIS:

- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA [004077].

The bird populations of River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA are also included within the designation of Shannon and Fergus Estuaries IBA. Considering the interest features and geographical coverage of the IBA are also included within the SPA designation, further consideration of effects on River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA in relation to the Proposed Development is sufficient to also address potential effects on Shannon and Fergus Estuaries IBA.

Likely Significant Effects on the following three SPAs were screened out and therefore did not require further assessment in relation to the Proposed Development:

- Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA [004168];
- Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA [004058].

Screening Conclusion

With regard to Article 42 (7) of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*, it can be concluded on the basis of objective scientific information following Screening, that the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, could, in the absence of mitigation, have LSE on European sites. Consequently, it is concluded that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required with respect to the following European sites only:

- Lower River Shannon SAC [002165];
- Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC [000030];
- Ratty River Cave SAC [002316]; and
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA [004077].

6.8.2 Stage 2 Assessment (Natura Impact Statement)

Following the assessment of effects in the Natura Impact Statement, it was concluded that, taking into consideration the embedded mitigation within the project design and the Species and Habitats Management Plan that accompanies the application for the Proposed Development, significant effects on the integrities of relevant European sites will not occur as a result of the Proposed Development, either independently or in combination with other plans and projects.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this Planning Report has assessed the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) Application for the Proposed Development against the provisions of International/EU climate change and renewable energy targets, national policy objectives and outcomes, as stated in the NPF (undergoing 1st revision) & NDP, along with the regional objectives of the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which has very strong renewable energy policy provisions.

The Proposed Development, which has an expected Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 52.8 to 66 MW, is a micro-project in the overall global and European solution to 'slash' GHG emissions by 2030, to meet the 1.5°C limit to temperature increase (above pre-industrial levels), as set by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In addition, the Proposed Development supports the creation and delivery of clean energy, enhances overall energy sustainability, and leads cumulatively to an increased share of renewable energy in the overall global and national energy mix. As one of the most energy import-dependent countries in the EU, with limited diversity of supply, Ireland is exposed to significant energy supply-side risks, e.g. in 2022, 82% of Ireland's energy needs came from imports.

Therefore, there is a clear national mandate to accommodate significant onshore wind energy infrastructure within the remainder of this decade, i.e. 2030. Furthermore, the National Planning Framework (NPF) emphasises a move to a low-carbon economy to reduce Ireland's carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets. The Proposed Development contributes to supplying the increasing demand for renewable energy which, in the context of the increasing climate emergency, is an urgent Irish national priority that must be given significant weight, given the wealth of supporting national and international policy. Ireland faces significant challenges in its efforts to meet EU targets for renewable energy by 2030 along with its commitment to enable Europe to transition to become the first, 'climate-neutral' continent by 2050.

Achieving 80% renewable electricity by 2030 will involve phasing out coal and peat-fired electricity generation plants, increasing our share of renewable electricity, reinforcing the grid including greater interconnection between Ireland and other countries, e.g. the recent 700 MW interconnector between EirGrid and France's RTE), and putting robust systems in place to manage intermittent sources of power, especially from wind.

In addition, the most recent EPA Progress Reports (July and November 2023) highlight that the delayed Renewable Energy Spatial Planning Framework (RESPF) is expected in Q1 2024. It is envisaged that the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP2024), and Ireland's accelerated GHG emissions and renewable energy targets, will reflect the volatile geo-political situation in Ukraine and the Middle East, along with the new EU Wind Power Action Plan published in October 2023, which promotes '*Renewable Acceleration Areas*'.

The assessment also took into consideration the innovative and robust Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which has renewable energy at its core and states that:

'There is significant potential to use renewable energy across the Region to achieve climate change emission reduction targets. With costs actively driven down by innovation in solar, onshore and offshore wind in particular, the renewable industry is increasingly cost competitive. The RSES supports renewable industries and requirements for transmission and distribution infrastructure.'

The environmental assessment also includes wide-ranging, planning policy aims and objectives, as set out in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, and the plan's accompanying Renewable Wind Strategy (RES) 2023-2029 and Wind Energy Strategy (WES) 2023-2029. The environmental impact assessment (EIA) process for the Proposed Development was commenced having regard to the fact that the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) 2023-2029 outlines the renewable energy resource that is deliverable in County Clare and states that its Vision is:

'To position the County as the national leader in renewable energy generation, supporting energy efficiency and conservation, with an accessible modern telecommunications infrastructure, achieving balanced social and economic development and assisting Ireland's Climate Action Plan'.

The environmental assessment was also cognisant that the subject site area is categorised as a 'Strategic Area' for wind development, with one turbine in an area 'Acceptable in Principle' for wind energy development in the county development plan.

The concept and development process adopted by the Application has represented a best practice approach to a renewable energy scheme design, minimising the potential impact of the Proposed Development through multiple design iterations and modifications to minimise the impact on the 'receiving environment', and to ensure compliance with the suite of planning policy at numerous levels. The design and layout of the Proposed Development presented in the Planning Application and EIAR represents the optimum fit with the technical and environmental parameters of this much-needed renewable energy project.

This Planning Report has clearly demonstrated that the Proposed Development is acceptable and consistent with planning policy at an international/EU, national, regional and local level and is compatible with the existing use of the subject site. The proposal will have no adverse impacts or effects on the environment or the surrounding landscape and is in line with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Finally, the Proposed Development will not lead to any contravention of relevant European Directives and/or National Plans and Regulations.

In conclusion, the Applicant respectfully requests that consent is granted subject to appropriate planning conditions.



Orsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited

Community Report

Oatfield Wind Farm Project, Co. Clare

604569

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Proposed Development

Orsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited (hereafter referred to as 'Orsted') intends to develop Oatfield wind farm in County Clare (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'). The site of the proposed development is located in the Oatfield and Gortacullin areas of East Clare. At the nearest point, the site is approximately 1.3 km to the South of Broadford, 4.7 km to the north-east of Sixmilebridge in East Clare, 7.6 km North of Ardnacrusha, approximately 9.2 km North of Limerick, and 19.7 km South of Ennis. The location of the Proposed Development in County Clare is depicted in **Figure 1.1**.

The Proposed Development connects to the national grid via a 110kV cable looping into an overhead line. The grid connection route comprises works in and alongside public roads to install Independent Power Producer (IPP) underground cabling to connect the Eastern Development Area (Eastern DA) to the 110kV substation, located in the Western Development Area, (Western DA). The connection will be made to the national grid via an underground cable circa. 4.3 km to the overhead 110 kV line located south of the proposed development in the townland of Ballycar North.

The Proposed Development will entail temporary accommodating works along the Turbine Delivery Route (TDR), in the townland of Knockbrack Lower, to facilitate the delivery of large components including wind turbine towers, blades, etc.

The purpose of this Community Report is to set out how Orsted initiated and carried out meaningful community consultation and public engagement in the areas surrounding the site of the proposed wind farm in Co. Clare.

At the commencement of the design phase, Orsted created and delivered a programme of ongoing community consultation and robust engagement with residents, local representatives and relevant stakeholders in the area surrounding the proposed wind farm site at Oatfield, in County Clare. This demonstrates Orsted's continued commitment to actively engage with the community and the value it places on their contribution and involvement, as plans for the proposed wind farm were conceptualised and formulated.

The site location of the proposed wind farm and its surrounding communities are shown in **Figure 1.1** below.

1.1.1 The applicant

The applicant is Orsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited (Orsted). Orsted owns and operates a 360 MW portfolio of onshore wind farms in local communities across the island of Ireland.

Orsted specialises in the sustainable development of renewable energy projects, working with communities from the pre-planning stage to operational stage and eventual decommissioning, and creating successful and long-lasting local partnerships and networks.



The Orsted Irish team are based in Cork and are led by one of Europe's most experienced renewables management teams, which also benefits from Orsted's position as a global leader in the field of renewable energy. Orsted is committed to developing sustainable projects with successful outcomes for all stakeholders. Working with integrity and care for the local community and environment, Orsted's wind farms have been contributing to Ireland's overall energy supply since 1997.

1.2 The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development in East Clare includes the construction, operation and eventual decommissioning of a wind energy development consisting of 11 wind turbine generators with foundations and crane pad hardstanding areas; a permanent meteorological mast (100m); a 110 kV on-site substation, underground cabling connecting the EDA to the WDA; and associated grid connection to the proposed loop-in at Ballycar North to the existing 110 kV overhead line. An Independent Power Producer (IPP) connection route of 33kV will be required to connect the Eastern Development Area (EDA) to the 110kV substation located in the Western Development Area (WDA). The IPP cables will be installed within the body of the local public road network for 10.4km.

There are temporary works required in the townland of Knockbrack Lower for transporting turbine components from the seaport at Foynes Port to the Proposed Development site; along with all associated site works including site clearance, temporary compounds and storage areas; upgrade of existing site tracks and construction of new site tracks; site drainage; and ancillary developments: including security gates and fencing, lighting and signage; and biodiversity mitigations and enhancements, including hedgerow planting. A detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided at EIAR Chapter 5 Project Description.

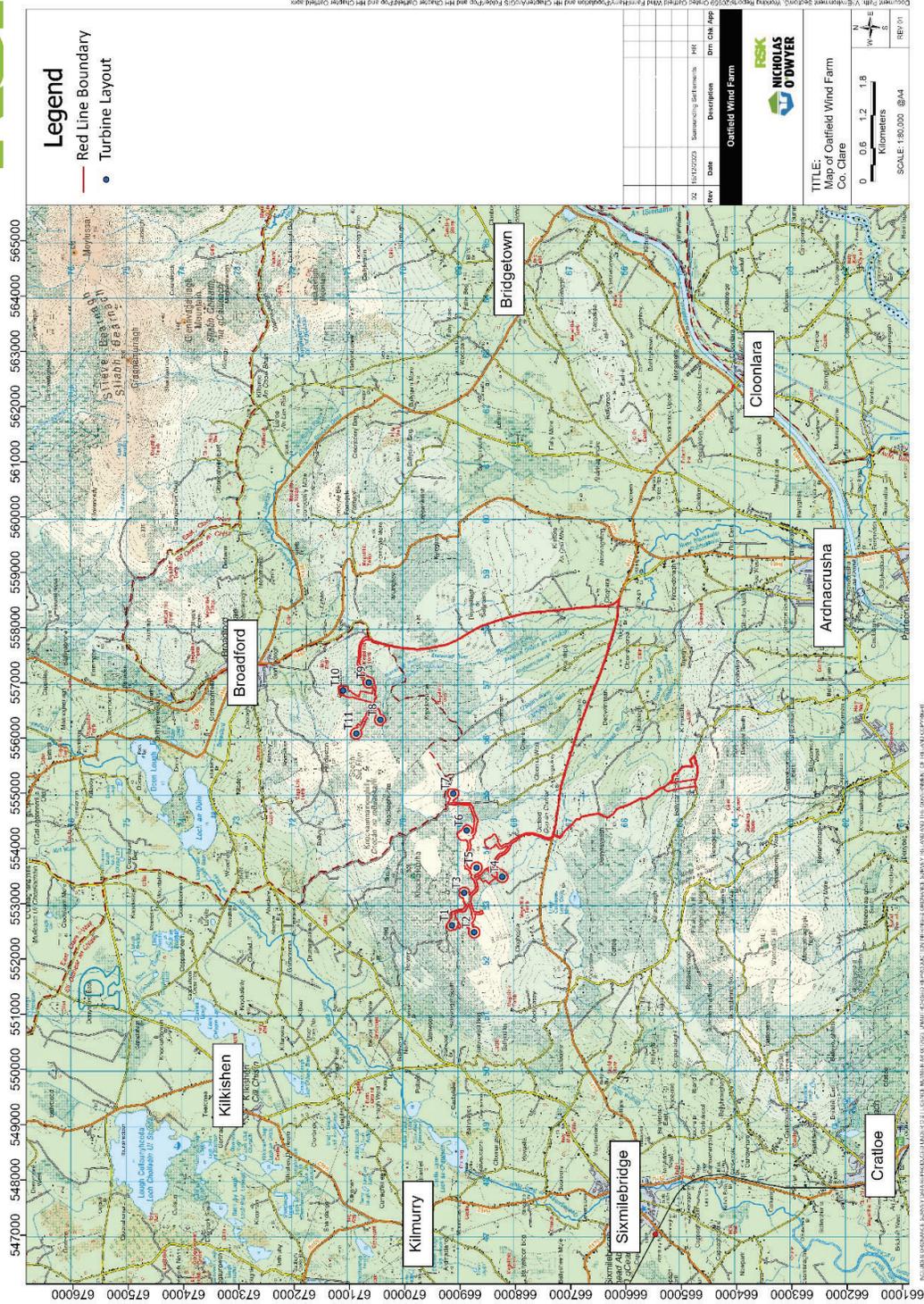


Figure 1.1: Map of Oatfield Wind Farm, Co. Clare

1.2.1 Renewable Energy - Project objectives

In relation to national guidance on community engagement and consultation for wind energy developments, the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006) state that: *“While it is not a mandatory requirement, it is strongly recommended that developers of a wind energy project should engage in active consultation and dialogue with the local community at an early stage in the planning process, ideally prior to submitting a planning application”*.

Orsted has met the requirements of the 2006 Guidelines and have also followed industry best practice, e.g. Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development, 2016, by preparing and submitting this Community Report with the planning application.

The Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019) have been taken into consideration in the approach to community consultation and engagement for the Oatfield Wind Farm development and the guidelines further address this topic in Section 4.3.2: *“In order to promote the observance of best practice, planning authorities should require applicants to prepare and submit a Community Report with their planning application and a condition on any subsequent planning permission should require developers to carry out the development in accordance with the approved Community Report”*.

The draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019) require wind energy developers to actively consult and engage with local communities – to perform as a ‘good neighbour’ – and to detail how the local community was engaged in the design of the scheme and how the proposed development will benefit the local community.

This report will be used to outline the process that Orsted undertook while engaging and consulting with the community surrounding the proposed Oatfield Wind Farm development. Orsted strives for a transparent and constructive approach to engagement with the communities surrounding the proposed renewable energy project in East Clare.

Orsted has conducted a varied programme of community engagement and consultation and sought to engage with the community to gain valuable insights into the local area and to facilitate valuable conversations, at a time that enables residents and stakeholders an opportunity to have their voices heard and to have significant impact on the overall project design and environmental analysis.

The draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019) state that *“meaningful community consultation also helps developers:*

- *to refine the design approach to a project reflecting a broadly based community perspective*
- *to explain the potential benefits of a project more clearly to communities*
- *to establish relationships with the community, as well as empowering communities to interact with and benefit more fully from projects’*.

This renewable energy project has the potential to deliver clean energy to the equivalent of approximately 41,297¹ homes, offsetting emissions by up to 32,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year. In addition, a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) will be established over the lifetime of the Proposed Development in accordance with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Guidelines to provide direct financial assistance for projects to support sustainable

¹ <http://www.iwea.ie/technicalfaqs>

community development, training, education, recreation, health, social inclusion, and enhancement of the built, natural and cultural heritage in East Clare.

1.3 Oatfield Wind Farm and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As a member of the United Nations and co-lead on the drafting of the UNSDGs in 2015, Ireland must display a commitment to implement the global sustainable development goals, known commonly as the SDGs. The 17 SDGs are illustrated below in Figure 1.2.



(Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>)

Figure 1.2: United Nation Sustainable Development Goals

Specific SDGs that are highly relevant to the proposed wind farm development in East Clare are summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Sustainable Development Goals relevant to Proposed Development

SDG No.	Examples of SDG Targets – ‘By 2030...’
SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy	Target 7.2: Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.
SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth	Target 8.9: Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities	Target 11a: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and

	rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.
SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production	Target 12.8: Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.
SDG 13 – Climate Action	Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

1.4 Key Stakeholders

1.4.1 Residents

There are no residential receptors within 500m of the proposed wind farm. Receptors are located within a 2 km radius from the Oatfield wind farm development. The Eircodes and residences within this area are deemed the proposed project’s closest neighbours. There are circa. 306 houses within a 2 km buffer of the nearest wind turbine.

1.4.2 Local Authorities

A pre-planning meeting was held with the Planning Department of Clare County Council in relation to the proposed development in East Clare. This meeting was held over Microsoft Teams on 5th October 2023 and was attended by representatives of Orsted as well as the Client’s planning and environmental consultants.

At this meeting the location of the proposed development was discussed as were the provisions and objectives of the extant Wind Energy Strategy (WES) for County Clare, as per the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. The discussion also included reference to the comprehensive site selection process, which was undertaken, and the key facilitators and constraints of the preferred/selected site.

Other items for discussion included the Proposed Development schedule, identification of the turbine delivery route (TDR), the grid connection route, the potential for amenity uses, and the importance of local community engagement and consultation with Clare County Council.

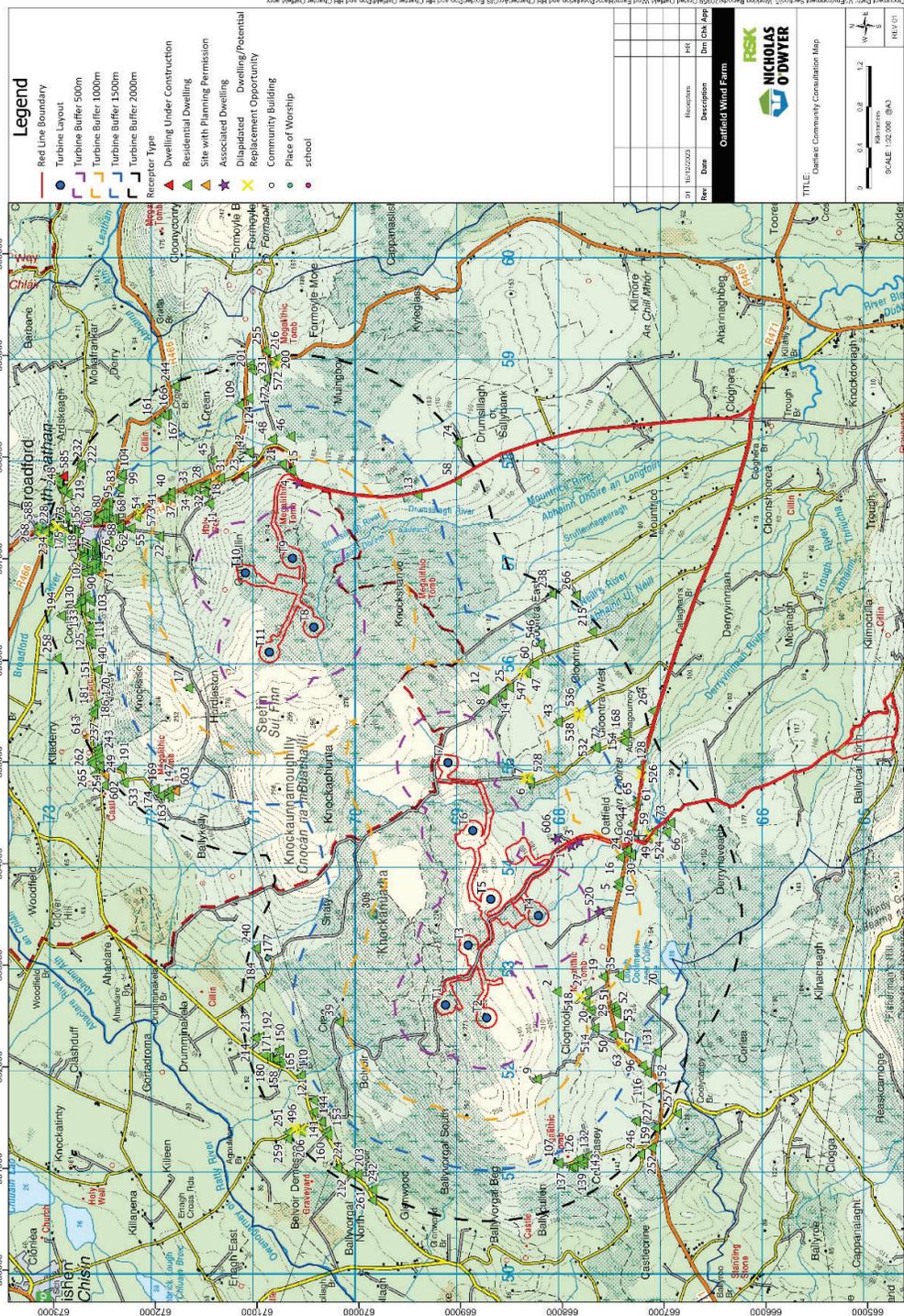


Figure 1.3: Oatfield Community Consultation Map

2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

2.1 Community engagement programme 2023 to Date

Orsted is committed to transparent and valuable consultation to support sustainable development in accordance with the UNECE Aarhus Convention². Orsted organised a community consultation event for the proposed Oatfield Wind Farm on Wednesday 23rd August 2023 between 4pm and 7.30pm in Dagger's Bar, Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare. There were approximately 52 attendees at the community event. Questions and issues raised by attendees and the response from Orsted are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Summary of key topics raised at the community consultation event

Topic	Orsted Response / action
Cumulative effects	<p>A query was raised about the proximity of the Proposed Development to another development currently in the pre-planning public domain, which is planned in the same general area as the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Orsted confirmed that they are aware of the proposed Knockshanvo wind farm. Both Proposed Developments will be submitted independently and adjudicated upon by the relevant planning authorities. The planning process prevents a situation from arising whereby both projects would be consented without full consideration of the cumulative impacts.</p>
Landscape and Visual / Noise	<p>A query was raised about the location of any proposed construction site compounds.</p> <p>Orsted noted that once confirmed, the location(s) of the site compound will be shown on the planning drawings which will be publicly available once submitted to An Bord Pleanála.</p>
Landscape and Visual	<p>A query was raised on whether it would be possible to reduce the height of, or potentially exclude entirely, any turbine if concern was raised by any resident.</p> <p>Orsted noted that this will be looked into - the EIA process would assess the visual amenity to reduce impacts, where possible.</p>
Noise	<p>A query was raised about the noise set back distance to houses.</p> <p>Orsted noted a minimum set back distance of 4x the tip height of the turbine model has been applied, meaning the turbines will be at least 720m from dwellings, apart from those financially involved. Noise regulations will be complied with at all receptors.</p>

² <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/aarhus-convention/introduction>

Topic	Orsted Response / action
Landscape and Visual	<p>A query was raised about the height of another wind farm development (Fahy Beg) in comparison to the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Orsted noted that in relation to the height of the Fahy Beg development compared to the Proposed Development, Fahy Beg proposed turbine tip heights were between 169m and 176.5m. The Proposed Development has a proposed tip height of 176.5m to 180m, which is not uncommon for onshore wind farms.</p>
Ecology	<p>Concerns were raised over birds of prey spotted nesting in the area recently. Concerns were also raised about bats and owls roosting/nesting near houses.</p> <p>Orsted noted that extensive ornithological and ecological surveys have been carried out in the area. The design of the Proposed Development is informed by the results of these surveys.</p>
Public Disturbance	<p>A query was raised about how long the roadworks / construction works would last.</p> <p>Orsted noted that the entire construction period would be approximately 18 – 24 months.</p>

2.2 Community liaison officers (CLOs)

As highlighted above, Orsted is committed to transparent and valuable consultation to support sustainable development. This enables active consultation and engagement with an informed and empowered community. In line with best practice, Orsted appointed two Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) to lead community engagement for the proposed development in East Clare. The CLOs are Aidan Stakelum (ASTAK@orsted.com) and Alan Barry (ALANB@orsted.com).

Both Aidan and Alan are responsible for developing community engagement strategies and stakeholder management plans to engage with new communities on renewable energy projects, as well as drafting communications material with the Proposed Development teams, including drafting of leaflets, booklets, website, social media and providing regular communication updates on project progress.

2.3 Planning and environmental consultants

Orsted has appointed RSK Ireland as the planning and environmental consultants, responsible for preparing the planning application, the EIA and EIAR (Environmental Impact Assessment Report), Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Species & Habitat Management Plan (SHMP). RSK Ireland is one of the longest established and most reputable multi-disciplinary engineering consultancies in Ireland. RSK Ireland has been an established presence in the renewable energy wind farm and sustainable development sector for over 10 years.

2.4 Stage 1 – residents’ correspondence / door-to-door visits

On the 9th August 2023, Orsted’s two Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) and the project managers conducted door-to-door visits to residences located within a 2 km radius of the proposed wind turbines. The team spoke directly to approximately sixty local residents and provided information leaflets to all houses. For local residences, where no one was available, contact details were left at the houses. The CLOs also took this opportunity to invite residents to a public consultation event, which was scheduled for the 23rd August 2023. Follow up calls and meetings were had with some of the residents who were not home at the time of the first door knocks.

2.5 Stage 2 - advertising

A public advertisement by Orsted was placed in the Clare Champion newspaper on 18th August 2023 to inform locals of the community consultation for the proposed Oatfield wind farm development and to invite local residents and interested parties to attend a public consultation and exhibition event at Dagger’s Bar, Ardnacrusha on Wednesday August 23rd August 2023.

2.6 Stage 3 – public consultation event

A public consultation and exhibition event was organised by the project CLOs and project managers in Dagger’s Bar, Ardnacrusha Co. Clare, which is located within proximity to the proposed project site. The purpose of this event was to present the proposed project to local residents and the general public and allow residents to learn about and discuss the project and ask any questions they had in relation to the proposed development.

The event on the 23rd August 2023, attracted approximately 52 attendees from the surrounding area.

Feedback from attendees at the community consultation event was recorded for consideration by the Proposed Development’s design team. Queries raised by the community related to landscape and visual impacts, noise related to construction works and impacts on ecology. On the 25th August 2023, the Oatfield Project website (<https://orsted.ie/renewable-energy-solutions/oatfield>) was updated with visual displays and information from the Public Exhibition.

The information and feedback gathered at the public consultation and exhibition event was fed through to the Orsted design team and the environmental and planning consultants from RSK Ireland who are working on the proposed wind farm development. This is discussed in the following section.

Follow up calls and in person meetings were had with people who attended the consultation event and wished to discuss the project further.

Orsted’s public engagement activities in East Clare during 2023, both face to face/in person and in digital/online format, are summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Oatfield Public consultation events undertaken by Orsted in 2023.

Date	Style Description of Activity
13 th July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Development website launched. The project is outlined on the website including a map for the study area and contact details for the CLOs.
9 th August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter 1 was shared with households within 2km of the proposed development. It formally introduced the project to the local community, provided information on the environmental studies and surveys that were underway as well as giving information on the Community Benefit Fund. A map was included showing the first iteration of the wind turbine layout. While dropping the newsletters, the CLOs and project managers conducted door knocks and engaged many people within the 2km and answered any questions that arose. The newsletter included the CLOs contact details for those who weren't home as well as providing details of the project website where more information was available. An invitation to a Public Exhibition was included in the newsletter.
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the summer the CLOs engage people with questions on the project via phone, email and in person.
18 th August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement on the Public Exhibition published in Clare Champion newspaper.
23 rd August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Consultation and Exhibition Event in Dagger's Bar, Ardnacrusha – approx. 52 people attended from the surrounding area. The exhibition displayed a number of maps showing the turbine layout. Posters were on display giving detail on the EIA process, what surveys were being undertaken as well as useful information on the community benefit fund. There were a number of photomontages on display. The CLOs and project managers were in attendance. The posters, maps and photomontages allowed for meaningful conversations with those that attended.
25 th August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project website updated with visual displays from the Public Exhibition.
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from the public consultation and exhibition event, the CLOs met with those who requested further consultation. All queries that arose post-event were responded to and in person meetings were organised/held with individuals.
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter 2 issued to households within 2km. Newsletter also uploaded to project website. Final turbine layout shown. Information provided on what informed the layout. Benefits to the community highlighted including Community Benefit Fund. Details given on the planning process and where the planning application and associated documents can be viewed.

3 INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON PROJECT DESIGN

The engagement process undertaken on the proposed project has given the Proposed Development team a detailed appreciation of the issues and concerns of the near neighbours. This close working relationship has facilitated the evolution of the overall Proposed Development design to understand and alleviate the concerns expressed as far as possible.

The local meetings and engagement with residents was hugely beneficial to the Proposed Development team. Listening to and respecting this local knowledge gave us additional information to consider.

Some of the questions and issues raised by attendees during the public exhibition have been summarised in Section 2.1 above.

More importantly, the Proposed Development team have assessed all feedback from the community and applied this to inform elements of the Proposed Development design. House-to-house engagement, telephone calls, email correspondence and the public consultation and exhibition event were of significant benefit to the Proposed Development team in understanding the local area, its terrain/landscape, heritage assets and biodiversity.

As the Proposed Development has progressed, local feedback has been utilised to inform the overall design progression of the site layout, site access, grid connection and the turbine delivery route (TDR).

4 ONGOING COMMUNITY LIAISON & COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND (CBF)

Underpinning all of the public engagement are the dedicated CLOs for the Proposed Development who are contactable by email, phone and are available for in-person meetings. These contact details will remain on the Proposed Development website, which will be in place for the duration of the Proposed Development and operation of the wind farm to handle enquiries, complaints or queries from local residents. As the Proposed Development progresses, regular updates will be posted to the Oatfield Wind Farm website.

Throughout all stages of the development, dedicated CLOs for the Proposed Development have been contactable by phone, email and in-person meetings. As the Proposed Development advances, regular updates relating to the Proposed Development's status and activity will be posted to the Proposed Development website and where appropriate, circulated to the local community.

Additionally, the Proposed Development team have assessed all feedback from the community and applied this to inform elements of the Proposed Development design and layout. House-to-house engagement, telephone calls, email correspondence and the public consultation event were of significant benefit to the Proposed Development team in understanding the local area, its terrain/landscape and biodiversity.

As the Proposed Development has progressed, local feedback has been utilised to inform the design progression of the site layout, site access and the turbine delivery route (TDR).

4.1 Post planning submission until 6 months pre-construction

Upon obtaining planning permission and contingent upon a successful Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction, Orsted is mandated to establish a Community Benefit Fund (CBF), as stipulated by the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). In the unlikely event that the company fails to secure a RESS agreement, it will commit to an alternative, voluntary community benefit scheme aligned with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Good Practice Principles Handbook for Community Benefit Funds (July 2021)³.

These guidelines outline that a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) should have a strategic focus, in line with county or local development strategies and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Based on the total Maximum Export Capacity (MEC) of 52.6 – 66 MW, the proposed wind farm, the Project has the potential to generate a significant Community Benefit Fund over the lifetime of the wind farm.

During this period, a number of key community-related activities will continue to be progressed. Section 4.5 below discusses the community benefit proposals.

³ Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2021. Good Practice Principles Handbook for Community Benefit Funds Under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme. Government of Ireland.

4.2 Pre-construction and construction phase

Prior to the commencement of construction of the Proposed Development, door knocks will be conducted and communications will be issued to residents informing them of the construction commencement date, timelines, details relating to traffic management, construction deliveries and contact details of the CLOs should they need to speak with someone in relation to the project. The project website will also be kept updated, i.e. the website will be live.

The Proposed Development will also engage with local suppliers prior to the construction phase to outline the Proposed Development's future needs and promote the use of local suppliers and service providers wherever possible. This may take the form of a "meet the local buyer/supplier" engagement and networking event to create sustainable partnerships in the local area.

4.3 Operational phase

The CBF for the Proposed Development will be set up on an annual basis to enable and facilitate community involvement and public consultation. The CBF will be related to the total installed MEC of the Proposed Development. This scheme will have a local positive long-term effect for the community groups and projects involved.

The Community Liaison Officer will be available throughout this period to directly address any issues or queries raised by local residents. As stated above, the Proposed Development website will also be maintained as a method of providing regular, up to date information on the Proposed Development including information on renewable energy outputs and projects being supported by the Oatfield CBF.

4.4 Decommissioning phase

A year prior to the commencement of decommissioning of the Proposed Development, the Proposed Development team will engage with all residents within the 2km zone to formulate the decommissioning plan and address any issues identified at that time by the local community.

4.5 Oatfield Community Benefit Proposals

4.5.1 Community Benefit Proposals

4.5.1.1 Allocation of the Community Benefit Fund in East Clare

As highlighted above, in line with Community Benefit Fund Guidelines governed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), and based on the current project scope, Orsted will generate a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) over the lifetime of the windfarm. The Oatfield Wind Farm would support the delivery and implementation of the UNSDGs in the local area along with 50% of the investment going to local clubs.

4.5.2 Enhancement of Local Social, Economic and Cultural Assets in East Clare

The Proposed Development is in close proximity to the 12 O’Clock Hills walking route, which is a popular destination for hikers, walkers, and nature enthusiasts offering stunning views of the surrounding countryside and a variety of flora and fauna. Due to this, there is a continuous need for fundraising to maintain the trails due to wear and tear caused by usage and erosion. The facility receives grants and sponsorships from members of the community, the Heritage Council, Clare Council and other corporate sponsors community to support its operations, and the CBF can also be used by the community to carry out maintenance of the trails and other sections such as wooden bridges across the streams, picnic tables, and benches. In addition, the CBF may be used to organise other events during the year such as night walks, solstice and dawn walks etc.



Source: <https://12oclockhills.com/gallery/>

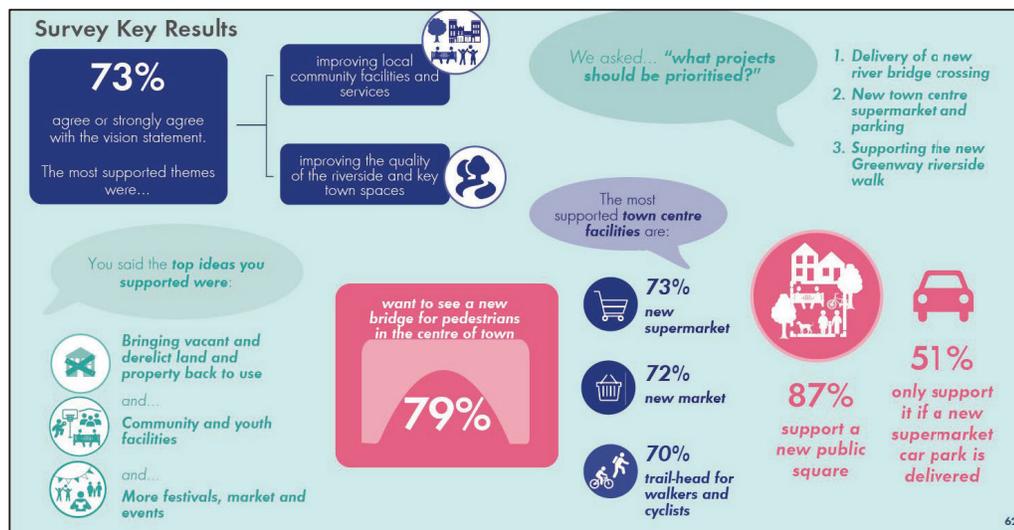
Figure 4.1: Walking Trail of the 12 O’Clock Hill

Examples of how the Oatfield Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund (CBF) could be used within the local area to embrace its social, economic and cultural assets are set out in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Enhancement of Local Social, Economic and Cultural Assets in East Clare

Quality Education & Training	Technology for Schools	Affordable, clean energy generation
<p>Community Project Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional building skills training, e.g. to facilitate the refurbishment of vacant & derelict traditional buildings in the local area • Training in Dry-stone walling and hedgerow planting and conservation • SDGs - training in preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) • Upskilling programmes for the community, e.g. walking and cycling tours • Scholarship opportunities re. Climate Change and Sustainable Development 	<p>Community Project Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free teaching and learning resources in relation to climate change and sustainable development • Technical and vocational skills re. digital literacy • Supporting young people to gain wide-ranging technical skills • Digital platform for the local area – promote tourism and active travel, e.g., walking, cycling, etc. 	<p>Community Project Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance community facilities in the area, e.g. create a playground in the local area • Work with Clare County Council in relation to enhancing Greenways and Blueways in the area – promote sustainable tourism (e.g. Euro Velo 1 Atlantic coast route) • Encourage Community Solar Farms • Enhance Renewable electricity sources • Energy upgrade for the retrofit of existing homes and vacant & derelict buildings in the area

Other community-led plans and projects that could be supported by the Oatfield CBF include the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First (TCF) Plan, which was launched in June 2023. Extracts from the TCF plan are set out below.



(Source: Sixmilebridge TCF Plan, June 2023, page 62)

Figure 4.2: Extract from the Sixmilebridge TCF Plan showing key survey results



(Source: Sixmilebridge Town Centre First (TCF) Plan, June 2023, Page 26)

Figure 4.3: Extract from the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First (TCF) Plan showing built and cultural heritage assets

4.5.3 Administration of the Oatfield Community Benefit Fund (CBF)

Throughout all stages of the proposed development, a dedicated CLO for the project is contactable by phone and email. The frequency and nature of interactions and communications will be dependent on the stage of the sustainable development project. As noted above, as the project advances, regular updates relating to the wind farm project’s status and activity will be posted to the project website and, where appropriate, circulated to the local community.

A collaborative process for the Oatfield Community Benefit Fund will be formed between the project developers/funders (Orsted) and members of the local community. The project team will initiate a process of reaching out to residents.

4.5.4 Further Information and Oatfield Website

For further information on the proposed wind farm project in East Clare and Orsted, please visit the website <https://orsted.ie/renewable-energy-solutions/oatfield> and/or contact the Community Liaison Officers:

Aidan Stakelum ASTAK@orsted.com and

Alan Barry ALANB@orsted.com

5 CONCLUSION

Community engagement and public consultation were facilitated over the pre-planning period, with a dedicated CLO who completed door-to-door house calls, and delivered information letters and leaflets to ensure that residents were made fully aware of the proposed project. In addition, a dedicated phone number, email address and website were provided with all circulated materials so members of the public could directly contact the project team.

This engagement process was commenced as early as possible to inform the design of the project and to inform the EIA process. Open communication between the applicant and community was fundamental to the iterative design process and run-up to the application submission.

In addition to the engagement undertaken by the CLO, public consultation events were organised to engage with the greater community and present detailed information in relation to the emerging proposal.

Comments and issues that were conveyed during the scoping and consultation process have informed the design, assessment and mitigation measures proposed as part of this project.

The Proposed Development will commit to the implementation of a community benefit fund. It is proposed that the annual community benefit contribution would be €2/MWh in line with the RESS. The CBF will align with Government policies and public participation, in accordance with the UNECE Aarhus Convention.

Orsted intends to align with RESS as it serves as a critical support mechanism for renewable electricity initiatives within Ireland. It provides pathways and robust support systems facilitating public participation in renewable energy projects.

The overarching aim is to bolster both energy security and sustainability while concurrently ensuring the economic efficiency of the energy policy landscape.

6 REFERENCES

Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland, 2016

Clare County Council Local Economic and Community Plan 2023 – 2029:

<https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/community/lecp/#lecp23>

Community Benefit Fund National Register - <https://cbfnationalregister.seai.ie/home>

Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019

EuroVelo 1 Atlantic Coast Route - <https://en.eurovelo.com/ev1/ireland>

The Sixmilebridge Town Centre First (TCF) Plan (June 2023):

[https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/economic-development/\[publications\]/sixmilebridge-town-centre-first-plan-51954.pdf](https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/economic-development/[publications]/sixmilebridge-town-centre-first-plan-51954.pdf)

[Wind Energy Guidelines 2006](#)

[Wind Energy Strategy \(WES\), Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029](#)

7 APPENDICES

Oatfield Wind Farm

The Project

The plan is to construct a wind farm within the Oatfield and Gortacullin areas, to the north-east of Sixmlebridge in county Clare. Under our current layout design, we envisage there being up to 12 turbines installed on the site although this is subject to possible changes between now and the planning application being submitted in late 2023.

The proposed turbines will be up to 180m tip height. This has been decided upon following careful consideration of any potential landscape and visual impacts from the site, with careful design and extensive modelling to ensure visual impacts are kept to a minimum.

We will be creating a number of new site roads, with some widening and realignment of existing roads in places. A substation will also be constructed, which will provide access for the wind farm to export electricity onto the national grid infrastructure.

Delivery of the turbine components will take place when the roads are quiet. The current proposed delivery route exits the M7 motorway onto the R494 at Birdhill, before crossing the Shannon on the new bridge currently being constructed south of Killaloe-Ballina. Trucks would continue along the R463 before turning on to the R471 near Cloonlara and continuing on westwards towards the site.

Project Description

The project as it currently stands will comprise:

- Up to 12 No. wind turbines and a meteorological mast;
- Upgrade of any existing tracks / roads and provision of new site access roads and hardstands;
- Creation of a new 110kV substation;
- Temporary construction compound(s);
- Borrow Pit(s)
- All associated site development works and apparatus, including onsite underground cabling and electrical works.

Project Timeline

<p style="color: #0070C0; font-weight: bold;">2015</p> <p>Ecological and ornithological studies began in the study area</p>	<p style="color: #0070C0; font-weight: bold;">Summer 2023</p> <p>Newsletter circulated to community with information on proposed development. Community liaison officers called to local houses. Baseline noise monitoring commences. Landscape and visual assessments begin. A public information evening is held.</p>	<p style="color: #0070C0; font-weight: bold;">Winter 2023</p> <p>Newsletter 3 is issued. Anticipated date for submission of planning application to consent.</p>
<p style="color: #0070C0; font-weight: bold;">Autumn 2023</p> <p>Newsletter 2 is issued with progress updates on environmental, surveys and a turbine layout design.</p>	<p style="color: #0070C0; font-weight: bold;">IBC</p> <p>Consenting authority either make a decision on the proposal or submit a request for further information.</p>	

Appendix 1: Project Poster and Proposed Timeline

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

RSK are the Planning and Environmental Consultants for the proposed Oatfield wind farm project and will prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA), which will be submitted alongside the planning application. This report examines the potential impacts the proposed project could have on the environment.

RSK will be issuing an EIA Scoping Document to statutory and non-statutory consultees to identify significant issues which should be addressed in the report. This will be circulated in August 2023 to provide them with an opportunity to comment and influence development design and assessment.

Feedback received from scoping consultees throughout the public consultation process will inform the proposed development design and assessments undertaken during the EIA preparation.

The siting of the proposed wind turbines and all other proposed infrastructure is being informed by rigorous ongoing site investigations and assessments including:

- Ecological surveys
- Ornithological surveys
- Geotechnical, hydrological and geological site investigations
- Shadow flicker modelling
- Noise modelling
- Archaeological surveys
- Landscape and visual assessment

RSK are compiling the EIA with the input of several other specialist consultants, including:

- Macro Works (Landscape and Visual consultants)
- AI Bridges (Telecommunications and Aviation consultants)
- RSK Ireland Ltd (Noise & Vibration consultants)
- Pinnacle (Traffic and Transport consultants)
- INIS Environmental Consultants

The EIA will be publicly accessible and will address the following headings:

1. Introduction
2. Background to the Proposed Development
3. Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives
4. Description of the Proposed Development
5. Population & Human Beings
6. Biodiversity
7. Birds
8. Land, Soils and Geology
9. Water
10. Air and Climate
11. Noise and Vibration
12. Landscape and Visual
13. Cultural Heritage
14. Material Assets (Includes Traffic and Transportation, Telecommunications, and Aviation)
15. Interaction of the Foregoing
16. Major Accidents and Natural Disasters
17. Schedule of Mitigation



Appendix 2: EIA & EIA Information Poster

Orsted

Benefits for the Community

There are clear benefits of renewable energy to society in general, at a global, national and local scale. With climate change, soaring European energy prices, energy security and the importance of having a secure national energy resource all being very topical in the media today, most people are now aware that renewable energy developments play an increasingly significant role in helping to mitigate some of the negative drivers and effects of these issues. For the purposes of today's consultation, however, our focus is on the local scale and how we might provide clear, tangible benefits for the communities surrounding the Oatfield wind farm project over the course of its lifespan.

We are committed to engaging inclusively with the whole community and developing a responsible project that is good for society and our neighbours. Working closely with the community nearby to the proposed site, we want to help bring forward sustainable, long-term community initiatives that meet local priorities, needs and objectives. We would like to begin a discussion with the community as to how such a fund could be directed towards local needs, amenities and services, for example:

- Local recreational facilities
- Broadband and connectivity upgrades
- Education, skills and employment initiatives
- Local services such as community halls or community event sponsorship.
- Local biodiversity enhancements
- Energy efficiency upgrades

The distribution of the community benefit fund will ultimately be for the community to decide in partnership with our team. If you would like to speak to us about the community benefit opportunities, please get in touch - we are keen to hear from you.

Near Neighbour Scheme

The near neighbour scheme would be designed in consultation with the community. This support can take many forms including direct financial support to the household with their energy bill, payments to enable households to retrofit their homes or support for further education. This scheme would be restricted to residents within a fixed proximity to the project.



Appendix 3: Community Poster detailing Benefits for the Community



Oatfield wind farm

Community Consultation Event Invitation

Dear Resident,

You are invited to attend Ørsted's pre-application community consultation event for the proposed Oatfield Wind Farm on:

Wednesday August 23rd between 4pm and 7.30pm
in Dagger's bar, Ardnacrusha.

If you are unable to attend, please feel free to contact us directly at the details listed below for further information on the project, or visit our website at:

Community Liaison Officer: Alan Barry 086 1030464.
Email: alanb@orsted.com.
Website: <https://orsted.ie/renewable-energy-solutions/oatfield>

Appendix 4: Community Consultation Event Invitation

LET'S GET READY TO RAMBLE



Tom Connolly, Harbour Master, and Michael, David, Patrick, Kelly, Tom, Doherty, Fiona, Catherine and Richard, Doherty, SNL, Gail, Lucy, Penelope, Jo, La Flan, of Ramble, Laura Spence and Caroline Logan of Kilmara Shydey and John Galvin of The Clare Champion with their dog Gail, and Tony and Catherine, at the launch of the fundraising RNL Burren Ramble.

Burren Ramble to take lucky walkers to the waters and the wild

ONE of the most beautiful places in the Burren will be the focus of a fundraising event on Saturday, September 23. The Burren Ramble is a charity walk to raise money for the Burren National Park. The walk will start at 10am from the Clare Champion and will cover a distance of 10km. The walk will be led by Tom Connolly, Harbour Master, and will be supported by the Burren National Park. The walk will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife. The walk will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife. The walk will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife.

12.4% rise in Clare prices

CLARE prices rose by 12.4% in the second quarter of 2023, according to the latest figures from the Central Statistics Office. The rise was driven by a 10.7% increase in the price of food and drink, and a 12.4% increase in the price of housing. The price of housing rose by 12.4% in the second quarter of 2023, according to the latest figures from the Central Statistics Office. The rise was driven by a 10.7% increase in the price of food and drink, and a 12.4% increase in the price of housing.

East Clare rivers chosen for pilot scheme

THE RIVERS of East Clare have been chosen for a pilot scheme to improve water quality. The scheme will involve installing a series of structures in the rivers to filter out pollutants and improve the flow of water. The scheme will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife. The scheme will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife. The scheme will be a great opportunity for walkers to enjoy the Burren and its wildlife.

Lough Derg RNL saves stranded boat

TWO people were helped by Lough Derg RNL to get their boat unstuck from a sandbank on Thursday, August 17. The boat was stuck on a sandbank near the shore of Lough Derg. The RNL crew used their pumps to lift the boat and get it unstuck. The RNL crew used their pumps to lift the boat and get it unstuck. The RNL crew used their pumps to lift the boat and get it unstuck.

Fergusons Hearing Aid Clinic Ltd 61, Catherine Street, Limerick. Your local Independent Irish owned Hearing Aid Practice. Introducing our new fitting suite at Ferguson's Hearing Aid Clinic. Within this new suite we recreate those challenging listening environments, which you may experience at work, in public places, restaurants or while driving. Enabling us to optimise hearing aid technology to suit your particular needs. For more information or to experience this product please contact us. 061-313633 info@ferghac.ie www.ferghac.ie

Orsted OATFIELD WIND FARM COMMUNITY CONSULTATION EVENT INVITATION. We are invited to invite the local community to attend a consultation event for the proposed Orsted Wind Farm at Wednesday August 23rd between 4pm and 7.30pm in Duggan's Bar, Ardara. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to contact us directly at the date and time below for further information and/or a copy of the consultation document.

On 19th & 20th of September 2023, the Orsted Wind Farm will be open to the public for a consultation event. The event will be held at Duggan's Bar, Ardara. The event will be held at Duggan's Bar, Ardara. The event will be held at Duggan's Bar, Ardara.



Appendix 6: Community Consultation and Exhibition Event, August 2023



Appendix 7: Community Consultation and Exhibition Event, August 2023



Appendix 8: Community Consultation and Exhibition Event, August 2023