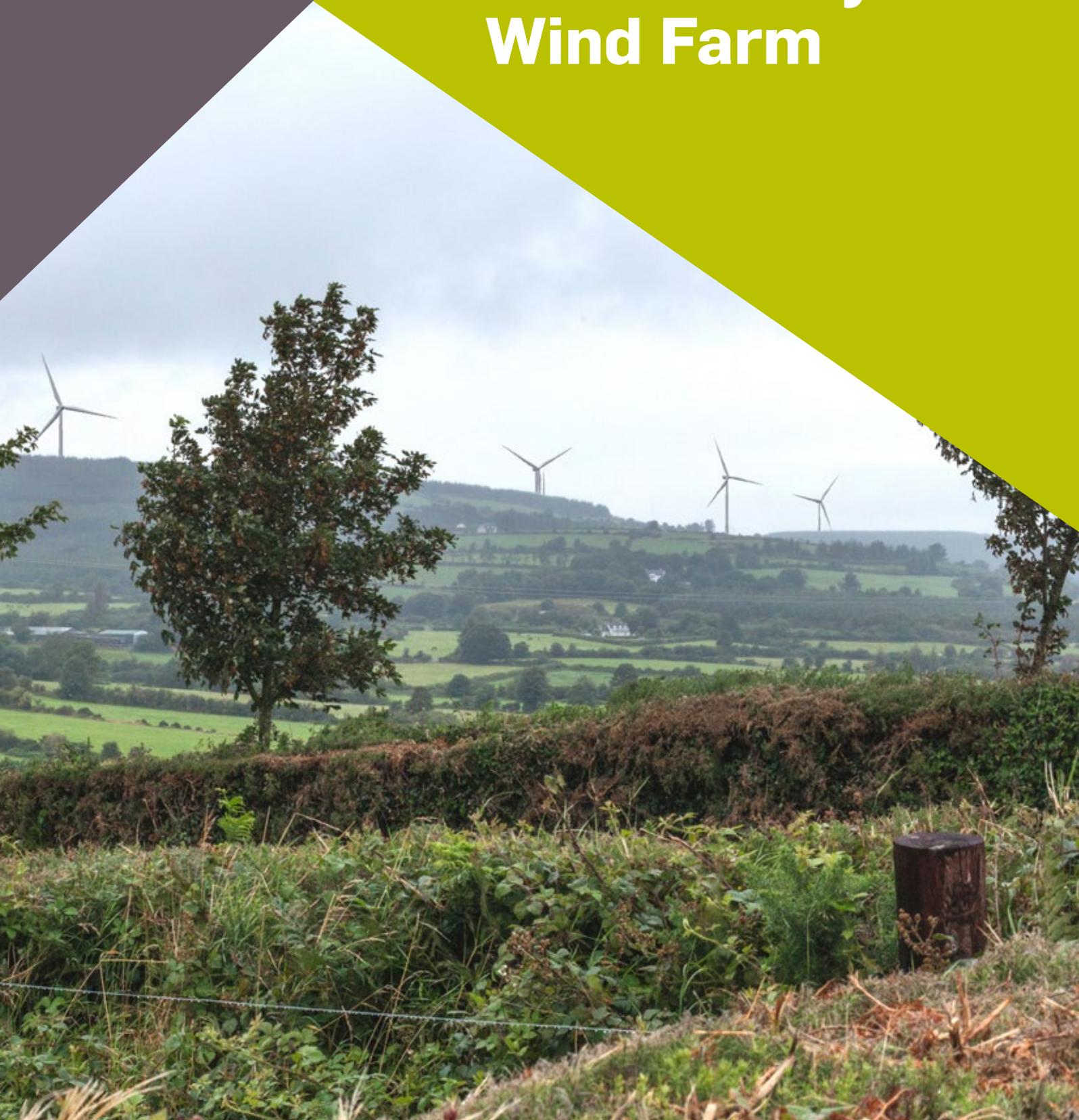


Castlebanny Wind Farm



Dear Homeowner,

First and foremost, we hope this finds you safe and well in these challenging times, and adjusting as best as possible to new ways of going about daily life.

As you may be aware, Coillte's Renewable Energy business in partnership with ART Generation has been actively exploring a wind farm development opportunity close to Mullinavat, Co Kilkenny. The community engagement model which we use within our team has given us an opportunity to meet with a very high proportion of people residing within 2 km of the potential wind farm.

The proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project is now at a stage where all the environmental assessment data has been gathered and collated to inform a proposed layout. This brochure sets out a detailed overview of all aspects of the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project and we look forward to addressing any queries that may arise. We propose to address any queries by phone call or in person subject to being able to respect the Government Covid-19 guidelines in place at the time.

We are planning a further event to share information on the project in the near future. The nature of this event will depend on Government advice at the time but will include an online project information platform as a minimum.

Please be assured that we will continue to make every effort to ensure that we provide you with all the information you need in order to fully understand the details of this proposed project. We are also committed to making available the necessary resources within our team to support any engagement.

Once you have had a chance to read through this brochure and should you have any areas of the project you wish to discuss further, please make contact with any of the team in the coming weeks using the contact details at the back or on the project website (www.castlebannywindfarm.ie).

Please stay safe and well in these difficult times.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran O'Malley

Kieran O'Malley
Project Manager
Coillte



Andy Fox
Andy Fox
Community
Engagement Manager
Coillte

1. INTRODUCTION

This brochure has been prepared to:

- provide an update on the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project; outline a brief description of the infrastructure that is proposed
- describe the expected benefits of the proposed development and how it may positively impact local communities and initiatives
- describe the technical and environmental studies which have been completed as part of the design and environmental assessment process
- outline the steps to be taken prior, during and after the planning permission application has been submitted to the Planning Authority

Why Onshore Wind?

In May 2019, the Government declared that Ireland was in the midst of a climate and biodiversity emergency. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that mean annual temperatures in Ireland have risen by 0.7° Celsius (C) over the past century and are likely to rise by 1.4°C to 1.8°C by the 2050's and by more than 2°C by the end of the century due to climate change. Climate change refers to the change in climate that is attributable to human activity arising from the release of greenhouse gases in particular from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, peat) for transport, electricity generation and agriculture. The Environmental Protection Agency states that future impacts associated with climate change include¹:

- more intense storm and rainfall events
- increased likelihood and magnitude of river and coastal flooding
- water shortages in summer in the east
- adverse impacts on water quality
- changes in distribution of plant and animal species

As Ireland's largest landowner, Coillte has the capacity and with that the responsibility to contribute significantly to Ireland's efforts to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Our forestry business sequesters 1.1m tonnes of carbon annually and our land asset, with its' suitability for wind farm development, puts us at the forefront of being able to deliver on the Government's Climate Action Plan (June 2019) which announced a target of 70% of Ireland's electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

This commitment will form part of the forthcoming climate change legislation for publication in the near future.

- A target of net zero economy-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 which will include:
 - » A target for the renewable share of electricity generation of 70% by 2030. Provision for five-yearly carbon budgets, consistent with the emissions reduction pathway to 2030 and 2050

More specifically, the Climate Action Plan 2019 states that:

'To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 we will:

Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%, indicatively comprised of:

- *at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy*
- *up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy*
- *up to 8.2 GW total of increased onshore wind capacity'*

The current capacity of installed onshore wind energy in Ireland is approximately 4,200 MW. The 'Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018 – 2027' outlines the need for an additional 3,000-4,500 MW of renewable energy as an investment priority.

Wind energy makes sense for Ireland for many reasons. It is a clean fuel source which does not pollute the air like power plants that rely on combustion of fossil fuels, such as coal or natural gas. Wind turbines do not produce atmospheric emissions that cause acid rain or greenhouse gasses. Wind energy is a domestic natural resource, available in abundance in Ireland and the resource is free. Domestic production of electricity from wind reduces reliance on imports of fossil fuels. Recent technology developments in onshore wind energy have resulted in significant improvements in the cost of energy and wind energy is the most economic form of renewable energy generation. Coillte's land asset is ideally suited to wind farm development due to the predominance of rural landholdings in areas of high wind resource and low environmental sensitivity. As a wind farm occupies such a small proportion of a site area, many other land uses can co-exist such as Coillte's forestry business, recreation offering and biodiversity management.

The further development of renewable energy sources is a vital component of Ireland's strategy to tackle the challenges of combating climate change and ensuring a secure supply of our future energy needs. The proposed project is being brought forward in response to these challenges.

Community Engagement

A Community Liaison Officer was appointed to the project in Q3 2019 and extensive community engagement has been undertaken with neighbours living close to the proposed site since then. This is part of Coillte's engagement approach for those who are most impacted by the proposed development and living within 2km of a proposed turbine. The Project Manager, Community Liaison Officers and ART Generation personnel have undertaken a programme of work to ensure that accurate information is shared and that stakeholders have a forum where queries can be posed and addressed.

The format of this programme includes printed information, house visits, a website and discussions with community and recreation groups, businesses, schools, etc. This brochure forms part of this process and all the information within this brochure is intended to provide an understanding of the proposed wind farm, its design and its environmental credentials. There will be a further engagement event, the format of which will be dictated by the health and safety recommendations in place at the time associated with Covid-19.

The Team

Coillte Renewable Energy is part of the Land Solutions division within Coillte which is responsible for generating recurring revenue by partnering, developing and adding value where Coillte-owned lands are suited to activity other than forestry, such as renewable energy. Coillte has been involved in the development of 4 operating wind farms including Raheenleagh (Wicklow), Sliabh Bawn (Roscommon), Cloosh (Galway) and Castlepook (Cork) which have a combined total capacity of over 300 megawatts (MW).

ART Generation is a Kilkenny based wind farm development company with extensive knowledge and experience in the development, construction and operation of wind farm projects throughout Ireland. It was the original promotor of Ballymartin and Smithstown wind farms in South Kilkenny. It most recently developed three wind farms in Tullaroan/Kilmanagh (Kilkenny) and Ballysloe (Tipperary).

The company has a portfolio of operational and pipeline projects throughout Ireland.

The team involved in this project includes a Project Manager, Community Liaison Officer and ART Generation as well as the support of a number of specialists in the areas of Grid development, Community Engagement, Planning and Policy and GIS and Wind Resource Management.

Tobin Consulting Engineers are leading a multidisciplinary team in carrying out studies, design and preparation of the planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) on behalf of Coillte and ART Generation.

Tobin Consulting Engineers has wide ranging experience in all aspects of the feasibility assessment, environmental impact assessment, planning, design and construction of wind farms and other energy related projects.

About The Site

The proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm is located in south-east Kilkenny approximately 2.2 km south-east of Ballyhale, 4.5 km north-east of Mullinavat and 5.8 km south-west of Inistioge. The total land parcel is approximately 1400 ha and the site is predominantly covered in active Coniferous forestry plantation areas on both Coillte and local landowners properties. The Arrigle River runs south-north to the east of the site area and the Derrylackey River runs to the west of the site. The topography of the site can generally be described as gently sloping, rising from c.130 OD in the east and 120 OD in the west to a high point of 250 OD in the north and 265 OD in the south. The site is bounded by the R704 to the south and local roads to the east, north and west while the South Leinster Way traverses the southern part of the site. The Arrigle River (which forms part of the River Barrow And River Nore Special Area of Conservation) runs south-north near the eastern boundary of the site. Several tributaries of the Arrigle and the Derrylackey River encroach on the periphery of the site.

In general terms, the area surrounding the site can be described as rural with dispersed settlement type. There are three commissioned wind farms located south/southeast of the site namely; Ballymartin Windfarm, Smithstown Windfarm and Rahora Windfarm.

¹ <https://www.epa.ie/climate/communicatingclimatescience/whatisclimatechange/whatimpactwillclimatechangehaveforireland/>



Photomontage from local road at New Chapel, west of proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm.

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Why This Site?

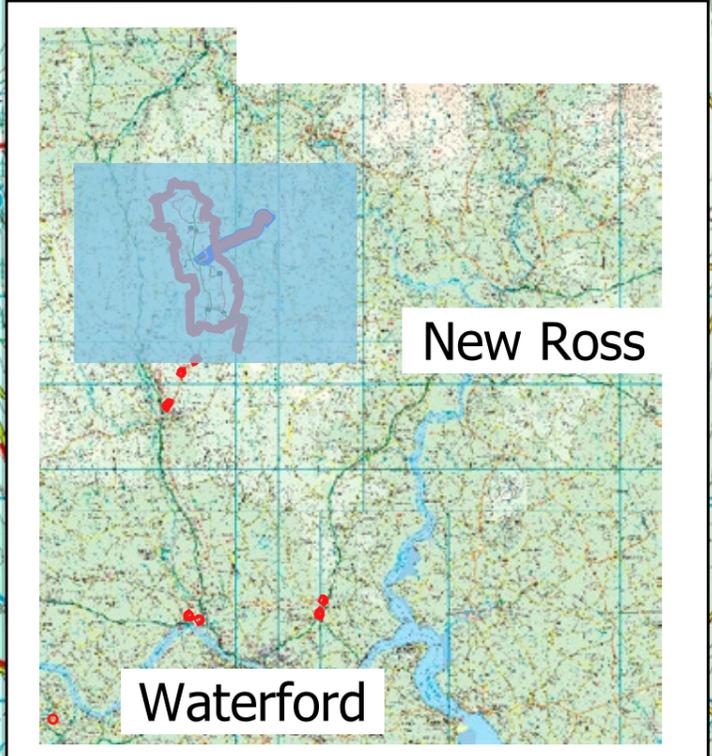
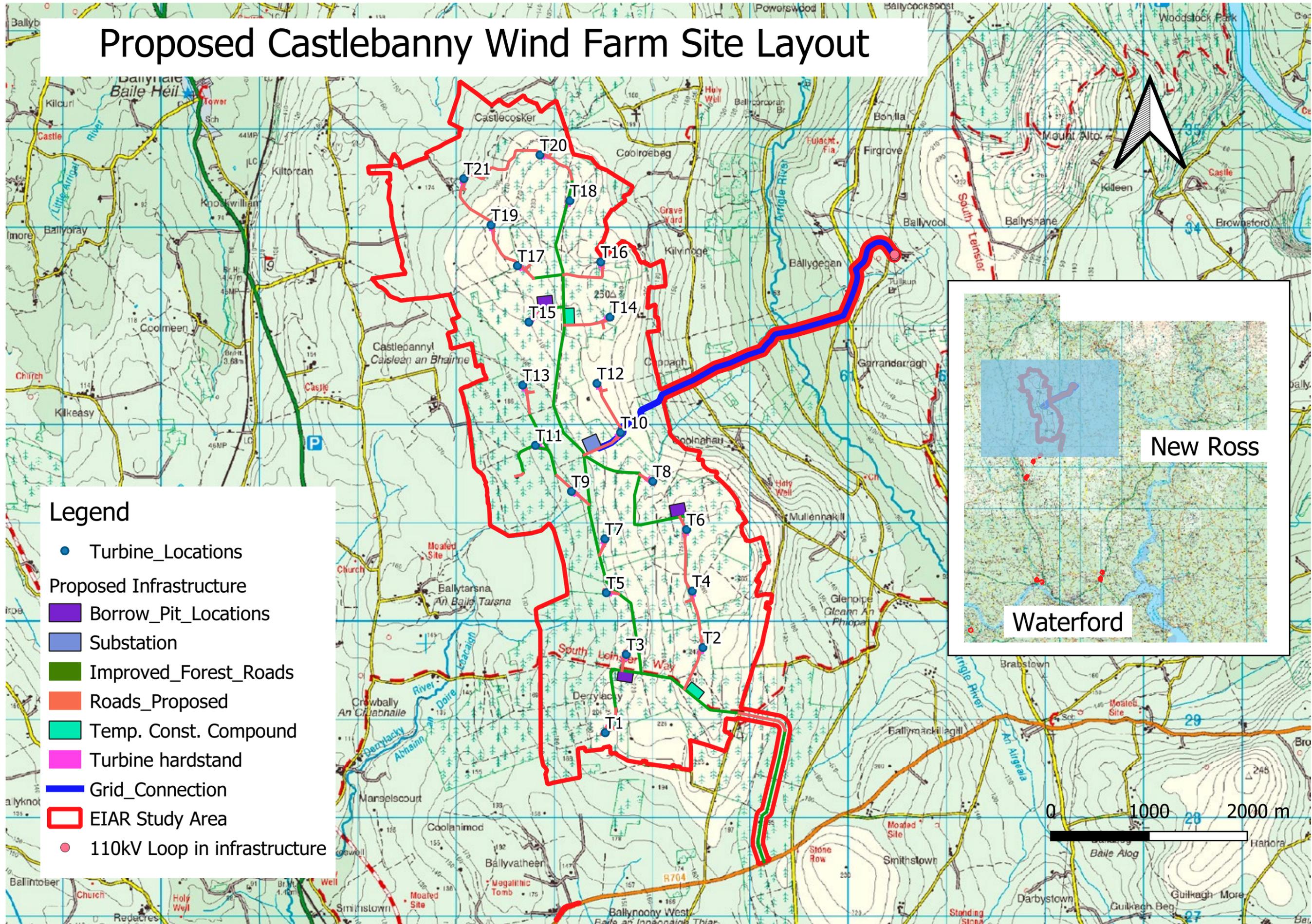
Identifying a site suitable for a wind farm encompasses several considerations. Suitability of the Castlebanny site can be attributed to the following characteristics:

- the proposed wind farm is not located within a Natura 2000 site (i.e. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA)) nor a Natural Heritage Area (NHA)
- the site is in close proximity to an existing 110 kV line ensuring minimal environmental impact and economic grid connection
- initial landscape and visual impact assessment indicates that proposed location is suitable for a project of scale
- the site has good annual average wind speeds;
- a significant setback from houses can be achieved, with the closest dwellings at a 750m setback from the turbines
- there is a network of existing forestry roads within the site that can be utilised

Currently, the proposed wind farm includes the following:

- 21 wind turbines up to a maximum tip height of 185 metres with all associated foundations and hardstanding areas
- onsite 110kV substation with loop in 4 km underground grid connection to the existing 110kV overhead line in the townland of Ballyvoole
- upgrading of existing site access tracks and construction of new site access tracks as required
- 3 onsite borrow pits to source stone material on-site
- 1 onsite met masts up to a height of 100m
- provision of amenity facilities to allow and encourage public access to the site for walking and cycling on site access tracks
- 2 temporary construction compounds, one of which will be used as a permanent public car park for accessing the proposed amenity facilities after the construction phase
- all underground cabling required to connect the on-site substation to each wind turbine
- tree felling and all associated site development works
- temporary road upgrade works at a number of locations to allow delivery of oversize loads to the wind farm

Proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm Site Layout



- Legend**
- Turbine_Locations
 - Proposed Infrastructure
 - Borrow_Pit_Locations
 - Substation
 - Improved_Forest_Roads
 - Roads_Proposed
 - Temp. Const. Compound
 - Turbine hardstand
 - Grid_Connection
 - EIAR Study Area
 - 110kV Loop in infrastructure



3. COMMUNITY BENEFIT AND INVESTMENT PROPOSAL

How will this project benefit the local community?

Castlebanny Wind Farm has the potential to bring significant positive benefits to local communities. The project will support sustainable local employment, it will contribute annual rates to the local authority and it will provide opportunity for local community investment in the project in line with the new Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS).

As with all wind farm projects which Coillte develop, a community benefit fund will be put in place to provide direct funding to those areas surrounding the project.

What will the community benefit fund look like?

Two important areas of Government policy are in development which will have a bearing on the establishment of future community benefit funds, the updated Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS). Both sets of policy are expected to be finalised in 2020 which will provide the Government requirements on future community benefit funds for renewable energy projects. We will fully take into account these two important policies as we present the proposed project's approach to community benefit.

It is anticipated that for each megawatt hour (MWh) of electricity produced by the wind farm, the project will contribute €2 into a community fund for the RESS period i.e. first 15 years of operation. If this commitment is improved upon in upcoming Government Policy we will adjust accordingly.

If this project is constructed as currently designed, this would mean that in excess of € 500,000 per annum will be available in the local area for community funding for the RESS period consistent with Government policy.

The above figure is indicative only and will be dependent on the generation capacity of the wind farm which is influenced by a number of factors including:

1. Number and type of wind turbines eventually permitted
2. Capacity and availability of energy production of the delivered turbines
3. Quantity of wind (dependent on wind conditions in any year)

How the fund will be used and administered?

The Community Benefit Fund belongs to the local communities surrounding the proposed wind farm. The premise of the fund is that it should be used to bring about significant, positive change in the local area.

Following the submission of the planning application, there will be workshops organised to facilitate consideration of the priorities for the local fund. The output from these workshops and any other proposals from the community will inform the structure of the Community Benefit Fund.

Near Neighbour Scheme

It is acknowledged that the people living closest to a wind farm are the most important stakeholders and a proportion of the Community Benefit Fund will be set aside as a dedicated "Near Neighbour Fund". The exact structure of this will be confirmed as part of the development of the overall Community Benefit Fund but would typically provide support of varying degrees for properties up to 2 km from turbines. This is supported by the requirements set out in the first RESS. These are set out in Section 7.2.6 of the RESS1 Terms and Conditions



https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/RESS_1_Terms_and_Conditions.pdf as shown below – this could be adjusted in future RESS schemes that may relate to this project.

'The Generator or its agent will administer the funds contained in the Community Benefit Fund and shall distribute such funds for the duration of the relevant RESS 1 Project's RESS 1 Support as follows on an annual basis:

(a) in respect of Onshore Wind RESS 1 Projects, a minimum of €1,000 shall be paid to each household located within a distance of a 1 kilometre radius from the RESS 1 Project;

(b) a minimum of 40% of the funds shall be paid to not-for-profit community enterprises whose primary focus or aim is the promotion of initiatives towards the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 4, 7, 11 and 13, including education, energy efficiency, sustainable energy and climate action initiatives;

(c) a maximum of 10% of the funds may be spent on administration. This is to ensure successful outcomes and good governance of the Community Benefit Fund. The Generator may supplement this spend on administration from its own funds should it be deemed necessary to do so; and

(d) the balance of the funds shall be spent on initiatives successful in the annual application process, as proposed by clubs and societies and similar not-for-profit entities, and in respect of Onshore Wind RESS 1 Projects, on "near neighbour payments" for households located outside a distance of 1 kilometre from the RESS 1 Project but within a distance of 2 kilometres from such RESS 1 Project.'

What is meant by Community Investment?

The proposed RESS sets out that future renewable energy project proposals enable the possibility for local communities to invest in projects in a meaningful way as a means to directly gain from the financial dividends that a project can provide should it be consented, built and operated. In response to this, Coillte have been working hard with external agencies to develop workable models of Community Investment. As with the benefit fund, we aim to take this work into the community during 2021, to continue to explore this exciting possibility and see how best to embed its design within the community.

Recreation Plan

A recreation plan is being prepared for the phased development of a recreational amenity at the project location. This will be developed as follows:

- **Phase 1** – this will include access point, basic facilities, signage for looped walks/cycles. This will be included with the planning application for the proposed wind farm
- **Phase 2** – this will consider development of the facilities included in Phase 1 based on further discussions with the community to provide additional facilities and access to respond to community needs. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments would be installed as part of the wind farm construction
- **Phase 3** – this considers how to link the project site with other recreational facilities in the wider area to create a cohesive recreation attraction to the wider area. This would be developed following construction of the wind farm and funded from the Community Benefit Fund

The overall theme for the recreation plan is a safe place for visitors to exercise and spend quality time together. The absence of traffic, gentle slopes and road layouts provide the perfect supporting environment to achieve this aim.

Additional Benefits

Additional benefits arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development include:

- up to 100 people directly employed at peak construction. 2-3 long term, high quality technical jobs in operation and maintenance
- substantial annual rates paid to Kilkenny County Council. Rates paid to Kilkenny County Council for the proposed development will have a positive impact on local infrastructure and amenities such as roads, public lighting, street cleaning, libraries, fire services and public amenities. Under current council rate guidelines, estimated annual rates of between € 1.8 and € 2.3 million would be collected by Kilkenny County Council
- indirect employment created through supply of a wide range of products and services



Photomontage from South Leinster Way, east of proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm

4. SITE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process for the proposed wind farm starts with a review of existing information to avoid or minimize potential impacts. This includes limiting the angle of slope of the ground where development can occur, including a setback distance from watercourses and residences, as well as a setback distance from any nearby European designated habitat sites.

The following design parameters were applied;

- avoid steep areas where possible – steep ground slope
- avoid watercourses where possible – 50 m buffer
- avoid dwellings – 750 m buffer
- avoid biodiversity rich or sensitive areas
- avoid telecommunications links
- optimise design for visual impact

A turbine layout was then developed to take account of all the constraints mentioned above and their associated buffer zones and the separation distance required between the turbines. The location and alignment of the associated infrastructure, such as roads, crane hard stands and substation, was then developed following confirmation of the proposed turbine layout. In addition to the above, the locations of the proposed wind turbines and all other proposed infrastructure locations have been informed by rigorous site investigations and assessments carried out over a two-year period including:

- Ecological Surveys
- Ornithological Surveys
- Geotechnical, Hydrological and Geological Site Investigations

- Shadow Flicker Modelling
- Noise Modelling
- Archaeological Surveys
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Wind Resource Modelling

The constraints map has been continuously updated throughout the development design process based on the findings of each of the site investigations and assessments that have been completed. The constraints map will be available to view on the project website.

Scoping and Consultation

Development projects such as wind farms require a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). In order to ensure that the EIA process was appropriate to the project and locality, an information document was prepared and circulated to a list of statutory consultees to ensure that the EIAR was addressing all relevant topics.

5. THE PLANNING PROCESS

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

The EIAR will focus on the areas outlined here and will accompany the planning permission application.

Tobin Consulting Engineers are compiling the EIAR with the input of a number of other specialist consultants.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Description of the Proposed Development

Chapter 3 Civil Engineering

Chapter 4 Alternatives

Chapter 5 Population and Human Health

Chapter 6 Biodiversity

Chapter 7 Ornithology

Chapter 8 Water

Chapter 9 Land and Soil

Chapter 10 Noise and Vibration

Chapter 11 Shadow Flicker

Chapter 12 Landscape

Chapter 13 Cultural Heritage

Chapter 14 Air and Climate

Chapter 15 Material Assets

Chapter 16 Interaction of the Foregoing

Chapter 17 Schedule of Environmental Mitigation

Planning Application

An application for planning permission for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm will likely be submitted directly to An Bórd Pleanála as the project is of sufficient scale to be deemed Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). During the project design and environmental assessment, consultation was carried out with An Bórd Pleanála, and the local planning authority, Kilkenny County Council, to discuss the project. The planning application will be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). A separate project website has been created and will be used, as required by An Bórd Pleanála, to present the full application and all the supporting documents and drawings. This will allow public access to documentation for review.

6. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

The assessment examines the potential impacts of the project (both beneficial and adverse) on the local and regional community. The key issues examined include population and settlement, employment and economic activity, land-use, residential amenity, community facilities and services, tourism, and health and safety.

Regarding the proposed wind farm development, the potential significant wellbeing and nuisance effects of the proposed scheme on the local human environment have been identified as follows:

- dust emissions from construction activities
- noise emissions during construction activities and operation

- public safety
- visual impacts during operation
- shadow flicker during operation
- traffic nuisance during construction
- tourism and recreational impacts
- interference with telecommunication signals during operation

Each of these issues has been fully assessed and are being documented as part of the EIAR.

7. BIODIVERSITY

The site principally consists of conifer plantation and improved pasture. There are some areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland, small wetlands and patches of scrub. There are a few small pockets of remnant blanket bog and wet heath. Small streams flow from the site towards the Arrigle River to the east, a tributary of the River Nore, while the western part of the site drains towards the Black Water, which flows south to the River Suir. Watercourses in and near the site are mostly of High or Good Status, according to EPA water quality data. The site is used by badger,

pine marten, fallow deer, common frog and six species of bats, including Leisler's bat. The birds on site are typical of conifer plantation and improved pasture habitats and include Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Woodcock. The rare butterflies dingy skipper and small heath are also present. The closest nature conservation area to the site is the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which includes the Arrigle River, at over 1,500 m distance from most of the proposed development with the exception of the grid connection which will cross the Arrigle River.

8. WATER

On a regional scale, the site at Castlebanny is located across the Suir and Nore Catchments. The proposed wind farm is located between the Arrigle River to the east of the site which feeds into the Nore River. Derrylucky River to the west of the wind farm feeds into the Blackwater River. All rivers ultimately discharge to the River Barrow. The water quality of the local rivers is typically good.

Groundwater at the site can be classed as highly sensitive due to the presence of some shallow subsoils and areas of exposed bedrock. The bedrock is classified as a poor aquifer therefore the risk of contamination travelling long distances is unlikely i.e. less than 0.5 km. No public water schemes or Group Water Schemes have been identified within 2 km of the site.

The River Barrow and River Nore SAC is the nearest designated site located hydrologically downgradient of the site, but the proposed development will be designed to ensure there are no potential significant impacts to any designated sites.

Drainage management will be employed to control drainage water within the site during construction, ensuring that surface runoff from the developed areas of the site will continue to be of good quality and no flood risk to the downgradient setting. Impacts on water during the construction phase of the wind farm will be imperceptible to none. A surface water monitoring programme will be put in place during the construction phase of the wind farm site. Based on proposed mitigation measures, there is no potential for significant impacts on the hydrology and groundwater as a result of the proposed wind farm development.

9. LAND AND SOILS

The geology of the site is made up of either till i.e. clay or a thin layer of subsoil which in turn are underlain by weathered and solid bedrock. Detailed site investigation works, including field mapping of exposures, shallow subsoil drilling and trial pit excavations were undertaken to assess the geology of the site for construction purposes.

Construction of the wind farm infrastructure will require the removal of subsoils and possibly rock to create solid foundations.

Excavation of bedrock from proposed on-site borrow pits and suitable off-site aggregate sources will provide appropriate construction material for access roads, turbine bases and general hard-standing foundations. Removal and reuse of subsoils and bedrock does not represent a significant impact on the geology of the site.

No significant impacts or cumulative impacts on the soil and geological environment are anticipated as a result of the proposed wind farm and its grid connection route options.

10. AIR AND CLIMATE

This chapter describes the likely significant impacts the construction and operation of the proposed wind farm development will have on air quality and climate.

While there may be an imperceptible temporary negative impact to local air quality in the immediate vicinity of the development arising from vehicle exhausts and dust generation during the construction phase, the overriding long term impact will be positive.

Once operational, electricity generated by the wind farm will displace electricity that would otherwise have been generated by fossil fuel power stations, therefore reducing CO₂ emissions by between 110,000 and 150,000 tonnes CO₂ per annum, improving air quality and contributing to the fight against climate change.

11. NOISE

The main sources of noise from a wind turbine include aerodynamic noise (rotating blades in the air) and mechanical noise (gearbox and generator). Noise only occurs above the 'cut-in' wind speed and below the 'cut-out' wind speed. The typical 'cut in' wind speed of a modern turbine is 3 meters per second (m/s) and the 'cut-out' wind speed is approximately 25 to 30 m/s.

Construction noise will occur during excavation and earth moving, laying of roads and hard standings, transportation of materials and erection of the wind turbines. The construction phase will be phased and temporary.

Noise and vibration assessments were undertaken for the operational, the construction and decommission phases of the proposed development. The cumulative impact with other wind farms was also considered.

Vibration, low frequency noise and infrasound are also addressed in the study.

To inform the noise impact assessment, baseline noise monitoring of the existing noise environment was carried out over a 4–6 week period in early Autumn 2019.

Following the establishment of the existing noise levels prior to development, appropriate noise level limits were then determined in line with Government policy and guidance. The noise limits seek to strike a balance between the noise restrictions placed on a wind farm, the protection of amenity and the national and global benefits of renewable energy development. The predicted noise emissions from the wind farm are then compared against these limits. The predicted wind farm noise emissions must not exceed the appropriate noise limit.



12. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

The assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects assesses the effects of the development on the landscape as a resource and on the fabric and character of the landscape. Assessment of visual effects relates to the change in views and visual amenity experienced by groups of people.

The proposed development is located in an area categorised as a dynamic landscape, in which change is anticipated. County Kilkenny's Landscape Character Areas have been mapped for the county, and the proposed development is located near the border of the "South-Western Hills" and "South-Eastern Hills" Areas.

The Landscape Appraisal of Co. Kilkenny has noted that "the south-western and south-eastern uplands were considered to have development potential". It notes in particular that "the hilltops and upland areas were generally perceived as most suitable for forestry plantations and the undulating nature of these units was considered to have the capacity to absorb wind farm, powerlines and infrastructure developments".

13. CULTURAL HERITAGE

The South Eastern Uplands of Kilkenny is a landscape with a rich cultural heritage that includes prehistoric settlements and monuments and medieval religious and secular sites. The area to the south of the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm has a particular concentration of prehistoric features including megalithic tombs, standing stones and burned mounds (fulachtaí fia).

Two archaeological sites on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) are located within the boundary of the proposed wind farm: a ringfort or rath (KK032-029) in Cappagh townland in the north of the area and a structure (KK036-040) in the east of the area, in Coolnahau townland. The structure is described as a 'large, overhanging rock with space under walled around to make a rectangular room', and it is traditionally associated with St Moling or St Mulling, a 7th-century monk and bishop who is said to have dwelt here as a hermit. Beside the eastern end of the planned grid connection cable route is another rath, in Ballyvol townland (KK032-033),

and one of the turbine delivery route works areas is next to the site of Ballynoony Castle (KK040-003), which appears as an earthwork on historic maps.

Sites of architectural significance in the surroundings of the proposed wind farm include those listed on the Kilkenny County Council Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Within the proposed wind farm area there are no RPS sites: the nearest are a national school and railway station, more than 1km distant.

As a result of the archaeological and cultural heritage assessment, mitigation measures are recommended to ensure the identification, protection and recording of any sites that may be impacted by the proposed wind farm. Archaeological testing and monitoring will be proposed to identify any previously unrecorded sites and appropriate management measures will be developed for both recorded and unrecorded cultural heritage sites.

14. MATERIAL ASSETS

An Aviation study has been completed to investigate if there would be any issue with Waterford airport flights and calibration checks.

A traffic study has also been carried out to consider the additional traffic associated with the construction of the wind farm and the delivery of the turbine components. Separately a delivery route assessment has been carried out which has considered turbine delivery from Belview Port in Co. Kilkenny.

A scoping exercise was carried out with telecommunications providers, and the proposed wind farm has been designed to avoid any significant impacts to telecommunications links.

The proposed grid connection will consist of underground cables which will connect to an existing overhead line. See proposed grid route on Proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm Site Layout figure.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The proposed development could generate up to approximately 120 MW per hour of renewable, clean electricity. Over the lifetime of the project, between 3 and 4.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are expected to be offset compared to traditional electricity generation. During construction and turbine manufacture, some carbon is lost to the atmosphere, but this is anticipated to be offset by the wind farm itself within a relatively short period of operation. These details are provided in the EIAR.

Wind farms emit no toxic substances or air pollutants, unlike coal or gas power stations.

The energy generated by the proposed development, will offset associated emission of greenhouse gases from electricity-generating stations dependent on fossil fuels, thereby having a positive effect on climate. It will have the capacity to provide enough electricity to power over 70,000 homes in County Kilkenny. The EIAR provides further information on this.

The proposed wind farm will take up only a small portion of the total site area; the existing land-use of mainly commercial forestry with some agriculture will continue in conjunction with the proposed development.



16. NEXT STEPS

Engagement with local residents and other consultees will be ongoing. There will be a public engagement event held prior to submitting the planning application – the nature of this event will be determined by government advice and recommended practices in place at the time associated with Covid-19 restrictions.

Once the EIAR is complete, Coillte and ART Generation will be ready to submit a planning application to An Bórd Pleanála for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm. It is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted in the latter part of 2020.

The planning application will include the following;

- Cover Letter to An Bord Pleanála
- Cover Letter to Local Authorities
- Planning Application Form
- Letter(s) of Consent
- Site Notice
- Newspaper Notices
- Pre-Application Consultation
- Planning drawings and drawing schedule
- EIA Portal Confirmation Notice
- Natura Impact Statement

Notification of the intention to submit an application supported by an EIAR will also be sent to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's EIAR portal and the confirmation will be included with the planning pack.

All documents and drawings will be uploaded to a project specific website which will be dedicated to this planning application.

17. MEET THE TEAM

Richard Walshe is the owner of ART Generation. A native of Co. Kilkenny, he has been involved in the development and operation of wind energy since 2002. Richard brings extensive experience and knowledge to the project alongside his deep understanding of the local area.

Kieran O'Malley is Coillte's Project Manager for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm development. Kieran brings extensive experience having worked as a civil and environmental engineer and renewable energy project developer for over 24 years.

Shane Lowry is our Community Liaison Officer. Shane enjoys working with people and brings many years of experience across different business sectors. Shane is your local contact for the proposed project at Castlebanny.

Andy Fox is Coillte's Community Engagement Manager. Andy has spent the past 18 years working hand in hand with communities to drive towards sustainable local development. Originally from Kenya and the UK, Andy now lives in Co. Wicklow.

18. CONTACT US

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* Note that email, website comment or phone contact is preferable at this time as there is limited access to the Coillte offices




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GROW · TRANSFORM · SUSTAIN

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