



Cush Wind Farm - Phase II

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cush Wind Limited

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report has been prepared by Galetch Energy Services Limited (GES) on behalf of Cush Wind Limited ('the Developer') to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out in respect of a planning application submitted to Offaly County Council¹.

The proposed development consists of the construction, operation and decommissioning of a three (3 no.) turbine wind energy development of up to 21.6 megawatts (MW), to be known as 'Cush Wind Farm Phase II', together with associated infrastructure and works.

The proposed development is an extension to the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I, comprising an eight (8 no.) turbine wind energy development of up to 57.6 MW and associated works permitted under An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) Reference ABP-318816-24.

1.2 STATUTORY CONTEXT

1.2.1 PLANNING APPLICATION

The planning application for the proposed development will be made directly to Offaly County Council as the relevant Planning Authority pursuant to Section 34 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) ('the 2000 Planning Act'). The Developer has entered into Pre-Application Consultation with the Planning Authority in accordance with Section 247 of the Act to discuss the proposed development (see **Section 1.6**).

1.2.2 RENEWABLE ENERGY DIRECTIVE (RED III)

European Union (EU) Directive 2023/2413 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources ('RED III Directive') introduces a range of measures intended to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure across EU Member States. The Directive has been transposed into Irish planning legislation through the European Union (Planning and Development) (Renewable Energy) Regulations 2025, as amended, which introduced amendments to the 2000 Planning Act.

The proposed development constitutes a Renewable Energy Development for the purposes of the RED III Directive. Accordingly, the planning application will be subject to the 'Completeness Check' provisions whereby the Planning Authority will first assess whether the submitted documentation contains the information required to enable it to proceed to assessment and determination. The planning application will also be subject to the statutory decision-making timeframes applicable to renewable energy development, commencing from the acknowledgement of completeness of the planning application.

1.2.3 EIA DIRECTIVE

1.2.3.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a formal, statutory process provided for

¹ In the EIA Directive, the person or organisation proposing to carry out a proposed development is generally referred to as the 'Developer'. In the 2000 Planning Act, the equivalent term is the 'Applicant'.

under the EU Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EU ('the EIA Directive') and transposed into Irish law by way of Part X of the 2000 Planning Act.

EIA is carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (in this case the Planning Authority – Offaly County Council) as part of the planning application process to ensure that proposed developments which are likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to a comprehensive and independent examination, analysis and evaluation of their likely significant effects prior to being granted planning permission. The process includes:-

- The submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report by the Developer;
- Public participation and consultation;
- An examination by the Competent Authority of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, any supplementary information and any relevant information received during consultation;
- A reasoned conclusion prepared by the Competent Authority on the likely significant effects on the environment; and,
- The integration of the reasoned conclusion into the formal decision on the planning application published by the Competent Authority, including any conditions to avoid, prevent, reduce (mitigate) or offset any likely significant adverse environmental effects together with, where appropriate, monitoring measures.

EIA is therefore fully integrated into the planning application process and helps to ensure that decisions to grant or refuse planning permission for proposed developments are made in the full knowledge of their likely significant effects on the environment, including through consultation with the public concerned. This includes an assessment of the direct effects together with any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term, long-term, permanent, temporary, positive and negative effects of the construction, operation and, where appropriate, decommissioning phases of the development.

1.2.3.2 Environmental Impact Assessment Report

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is a written statement prepared by the Developer of the significant effects, if any, which the proposed development, if carried out, is likely to have on the environment. Key features of the preparation of an EIAR include scoping; consultation; consideration of reasonable alternatives; establishment of the receiving (baseline) environment; impact assessment; mitigation; assessment of residual effects; offset measures, where appropriate; and monitoring.

The preparation of an EIAR is an iterative process incorporating repeated steps of design and re-design carried out throughout the design and consenting process so as to allow for preventative and ameliorative action, as necessary, at the earliest point in time when the approximate magnitude, character, duration and significance of any likely effects become known and where, through the consideration of reasonable alternatives, changes can still be made to the proposed development that anticipate, avoid and, where possible, mitigate any likely significant adverse effects.

The EIAR is therefore the principal document that informs the EIA process and provides relevant information which the Competent Authority can use, amongst other

considerations (including, where appropriate, its own supplementary assessments), in independently undertaking EIA and informing its decision to grant (including subject to conditions and/or modifications) or to refuse planning permission for the proposed development and/or to seek further information from the Developer.

The EIAR also facilitates public participation and consultation, and can be used by third parties, including members of the public concerned, to evaluate the proposed development and its likely significant environmental effects, and to inform any submissions made to the Competent Authority during the planning application process (see **Section 1.10**).

1.3 DEFINITION OF THE PROJECT

For the purposes of the EIA Directive, the 'project' assessed in this EIAR comprises the proposed development for which planning permission is sought, together with associated off-site works. A description of the project is presented in **Chapter 3**.

The project comprises the construction, operation and decommissioning of 3 no. wind turbines and all associated and ancillary infrastructure and works for which planning permission is sought from Offaly County Council. These on-site elements include wind turbines, turbine foundations, crane hardstands, access tracks, internal wind farm cabling, spoil management, site drainage infrastructure and the wind farm switch room.

A 10-year planning permission period is sought from Offaly County Council, providing a 10-year period from the final grant of permission within which the development may be commenced. The extended permission period reflects the nature and scale of the project and the time which may be required to complete post-consent processes, including the grid connection process and the discharge of relevant planning conditions.

The project also includes off-site elements for EIA purposes, including a c. 5 km 33 kV underground electricity line required to connect the proposed development to the national electricity network at the proposed Mullanafawnia 110 kilovolt (kV) substation, together with off-site accommodation works associated with the turbine delivery haul route. The electricity line does not form part of the development for which planning permission is being sought from Offaly County Council and will be subject to a separate future planning application.

The EIAR also assesses the cumulative effects of the project in combination with other relevant existing, permitted and proposed projects. A list of projects considered in this EIAR for cumulative assessment purposes is presented in **Table 1.4** including, inter alia, the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I; the rehabilitation of Galros Bog being undertaken by Bord na Móna pursuant to IPC Licence P0500-01 and the *Galros Bog Draft Cutaway Bog Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan (2026)*; and the proposed Mullanafawnia 110 kV substation².

Unless otherwise stated, references to the 'project' throughout this EIAR are to the project as defined in this section. Where individual components of the project are referred to separately within this EIAR, such references are used to assist the reader in

² The proposed Mullanafawnia 110k V substation is currently the subject of Strategic Infrastructure Development Pre-Application Consultation with An Coimisiún Pleanála (Reference: ACP-324608-26). The substation is being proposed by a separate developer and does not form part of the project assessed in this EIAR. However, it is assessed cumulatively, where relevant, in this EIAR.

understanding the particular element under assessment and do not alter the overall definition of the project assessed in this EIAR.

References to the project should also be understood as encompassing the micro-siting of wind turbines and other project infrastructure in accordance with the applicable guidelines³, together with any other immaterial deviations which may arise during detailed design or the construction phase, where such deviations do not materially alter the project or the likely significant environmental effects identified and assessed in this EIAR.

The project has an anticipated operation phase of 35 years following full commissioning. This EIAR assesses the project on the basis that it will be decommissioned at the end of the 35-year operation phase. Any further operation beyond that period would be subject to a further planning application and any environmental assessment required at that time.

1.4 EIA SCREENING

The first stage of the EIA process involves deciding whether the project is of a type for which EIA is required having regard to its type, scale, location and potential for significant effects on the environment.

In accordance with the provisions of the 2000 Planning Act, EIA is mandatory when certain prescribed classes of projects exceed specified thresholds. Planning applications for such projects must be accompanied by an EIAR.

Schedule 5, Part 2, Class 3(i) of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) ('the 2001 Planning Regulations') provides that the following installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than 5 turbines or having a total output greater than 5 megawatts shall be subject to EIA.

The project will have a total output of up to 21.6MW which is greater than 5MW and therefore exceeds the mandatory threshold for EIA. Accordingly, EIA is mandatory in respect of the project.

1.5 EIA SCOPING

The second stage of the EIA process involves identifying the environmental issues which may give rise to likely significant environmental effects and identifying those that do not require further detailed assessment ('scoped out'). This scoping process is therefore highly interrelated with the consultation and public participation process as described in **Section 1.6** below.

The prior determination of the nature and detail of the information to be contained in the EIAR, and what methods should be used to gather and assess that information, is one of the most important stages of EIA and may be conducted through a formal or informal process.

Scoping helps ensure that the EIAR remains focussed on issues which may give rise to likely significant environmental effects. This helps improve the clarity and conciseness of the EIAR, making it easier for the public concerned to participate.

It is important to note that all of the prescribed environmental factors listed in the EIA Directive must be addressed in the EIAR. Only issues and sub-topics related to those

³ See Section 5.3 of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006. Wind turbine positioning is also addressed at Section 7.5 of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019.

factors can be 'scoped out'. In this case, however, no environmental factors were 'scoped out' from the EIAR.

In undertaking scoping, the statutory obligations set out in the 2001 Planning Regulations and a range of guidance documents were considered, including those listed in **Section 1.7.3** below.

A desktop analysis was also undertaken of relevant data sources and precedent EIARs prepared for similar developments, together with other relevant policy documents, such as the *Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027* and the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared pursuant to the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC.

1.5.1 SCOPING REPORT

As part of the scoping process, a *Preliminary Scoping Report* was prepared to provide an overview of the project context; the baseline environment; alternatives considered; the project description and its likely significant environmental effects; and proposed mitigation and monitoring measures. The *Preliminary Scoping Report* was informed by a desktop review of available environmental information, preliminary environmental constraints mapping, site walkovers and other preliminary site investigations undertaken by the EIAR Project Team and relevant environmental specialists. The scoping process also included an assessment of relevant offsite works.

The *Preliminary Scoping Report* was also used to inform the consultation process, as described in **Section 1.6** below, through which comments were invited from consultees on the information to be included in the EIAR. This allowed preliminary opinions to be shared with the Developer and the project design team and, where possible, the project to be amended to avoid or minimise likely significant adverse environmental effects.

Following the preliminary scoping process, a *Final Scoping Report* (see **Annex 1.1**) was prepared detailing the findings of the scoping exercise, including environmental constraints analysis and consultation with stakeholders, prescribed bodies and the local community.

1.5.2 FORMAL SCOPING

Section 173 of the 2000 Planning Act provides that an applicant for planning permission may request a written Opinion from the relevant Planning Authority on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in an EIAR. Where an Opinion is issued, the EIAR must be based on that Opinion and include the information that may be reasonably required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment.

The RED III Directive (see Section 1.2.2 above) introduced further requirements in respect of EIA scoping for renewable energy development. These were transposed into Irish planning law, in part, by the *European Union (Planning and Development) (Renewable Energy) Regulations 2025, as amended*. The RED III provisions provide for mandatory EIA scoping for relevant renewable energy development; however, this requirement does not commence until 1 November 2026. Accordingly, as the planning application is being submitted to the Planning Authority prior to that date, there is no statutory requirement to undertake formal mandatory EIA scoping for the project.

Notwithstanding the above, an informal scoping process was undertaken to inform

this EIAR. This included the preparation and circulation of the *Preliminary Scoping Report*, consultation with Offaly County Council, engagement with prescribed bodies and other relevant stakeholders, and consultation with the local community. The responses received were fully taken into account in the preparation of the EIAR.

1.5.3 ITERATIVE SCOPING

As an active, integrated and iterative process, scoping continued throughout the preparation of the EIAR, including during the impact assessment stage. The scope was continually reviewed through communication and consultation with the project design team, and in response to feedback received from the consultation and public participation process.

This allowed potential environmental effects to be identified and the project modified to avoid or reduce effects through redesign and the incorporation of mitigation measures. The consideration of reasonable alternatives in **Chapter 2** records the key outcomes of this iterative process.

1.6 CONSULTATION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Effective consultation and public participation are important elements of the EIA process and are consistent with the principles of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. Early consultation helps inform the public concerned and statutory and non-statutory consultees about the project, while allowing relevant environmental issues, information and potential mitigation measures to be identified and considered during the project design and EIAR process.

There are specific statutory procedures for public participation and consultation in the EIA and planning application process. Public participation is not, however, mandatory at the pre-application stage. Nevertheless, it is recommended by the *Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019* and, in accordance with best practice, the Developer facilitated public participation during the project design and EIAR preparation process.

1.6.1 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

1.6.1.1 Consultation with Offaly County Council

A pre-planning consultation meeting in respect of the project was held with Offaly County Council on 16 February 2026 in accordance with Section 247 of the 2000 Planning Act. A written record of the meeting is enclosed at **Annex 1.2**.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the Planning Authority with an overview of the project, including its general location, the characteristics of the project site, the relationship with the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I development, and the principal planning and environmental matters to be addressed in the planning application and EIAR. The principal matters discussed included:

- the scope and emerging design of the project, including its principal components and grid connection arrangements;
- the site selection process, environmental constraints and the iterative evolution of the project design;
- environmental scoping and consultation with relevant bodies and stakeholders;

- design flexibility, including turbine dimensions and the process for seeking an opinion on unconfirmed details (see **Section 1.8.3**);
- the relevance of RED III to the planning application process;
- traffic and transport matters, including the turbine delivery route and relevant TII comments made in respect of Cush Wind Farm Phase I;
- landscape, visual and cultural heritage considerations, including key views from Birr and the Roscrea Road approach to Birr;
- the proximity of the I-LOFAR station at Birr Castle and its inclusion on Ireland's Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Site consideration; and
- noise and shadow flicker, including the requirement for updated housing and receptor mapping.

The matters raised during the pre-planning consultation have been taken into account in the preparation of the planning application and EIAR, including through the iterative design and environmental assessment processes.

Further correspondence was issued to Offaly County Council on 28 September 2026, providing the proposed application document schedule and latest project layout and seeking an initial view on any obvious omissions from the proposed submission documentation. This followed engagement with the Council regarding the revised substation and grid connection arrangements, application route and submission programme.

1.6.1.2 Stakeholder & Prescribed Body Consultation

A wide range of statutory and non-statutory organisations, including all bodies prescribed in the Planning Regulations, were contacted during the scoping process to seek their views on the scope of the EIAR and environmental issues which may give rise to likely significant effects of the project.

In January 2026, consultees were issued with the *Preliminary Scoping Report* accompanied by relevant maps and drawings and invited to provide written feedback. The Irish Low Frequency Array (I-LOFAR) at Birr Castle was also consulted and furnished with a copy of the Radio Telescope Impact Assessment (**Annex 14.2**) in March 2026.

Telecommunication service providers were identified through a review of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) mapping database⁴, and relevant link providers were subsequently consulted. Further details are provided in the *Final Scoping Report* at **Annex 1.1**.

Table 1.1 lists the organisations consulted, whether a response was received and a summary of the responses. A sample consultation letter is provided at **Annex 1.6** and all responses received are provided at **Annex 1.7**.

Responses received during the consultation process were taken into account in developing the project design and preparing the EIAR. Consultees will have a further opportunity to make submissions through the statutory planning application process.

⁴ <https://siteviewer.comreg.ie/>

1.6.1.3 Transboundary Consultation

The Espoo Convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context provides for notification and consultation where a project is likely to cause significant adverse transboundary environmental effects. Given the nature and geographical location of the project, no likely significant adverse transboundary effects have been identified and, accordingly, no transboundary consultation was considered necessary.

1.6.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.6.2.1 Non-Statutory Public Consultation

The Developer carried out public consultation throughout the project design and EIAR preparation process. Door-to-door visits and leaflet distribution commenced in March 2026. A consultation clinic was held on 4 June 2026 at Birr Golf Club, Birr, County Offaly, where local residents were given the opportunity, by appointment, to discuss the project directly with the community engagement team. Draft layout drawings and photomontages were made available to attendees. Further engagement included updating residents in August 2026 on the status of the previously proposed substation arrangements.

The public consultation process was managed by a dedicated Community Liaison Officer. A project website (www.cushwindfarm.ie) was established to provide information on the project and consultation process, together with dedicated email and freephone contact details.

Feedback received through public consultation was considered alongside the environmental assessments in the ongoing project design process. A full report on the public consultation process undertaken by the Developer, including the issues raised and responses provided, is presented at **Annex 1.8**.

1.6.2.2 Statutory Public Participation

Following submission of the planning application and EIAR, public participation will take place in accordance with the 2000 Planning Act and 2001 Planning Regulations, providing an opportunity for members of the public and statutory consultees to make submissions, as described in **Section 1.10** below.

Consultee	Response	Summary of Feedback
Airspeed Telecom	No	-
AirNav Ireland	No	-
An Garda Síochána	Yes	This is a planning application process which is outside the remit or comment of An Garda Síochána.
Ajisko Ltd	No	-
An Taisce	No	-
Bat Conservation Ireland	Yes	Acknowledgement Only - will not be providing a response due to lack of resources.
Birdwatch Ireland	No	-
Bord Gáis Energy	No	-
Coimisiún na Meán	Yes	Content.
BT Communications Ireland	No	-
Commission for Communications Regulation	No	-
Commission for Regulation of Utilities	No	-
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	No	-
Department of Defence	Yes	Content - observations re: lighting and radar.
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	Yes	Response from Geological Survey of Ireland. Referral to datasets and mapping.
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	Yes	Development Applications Unit (DAU) response – Nature conservation and Archaeology comments.
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media	No	-
Department of Transport	Yes	Commentary and reference to guidance for development proposals which include cables in the road network.
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	No	-
Eir Mobile	Yes	Content.
Eirgrid PLC	No	-
Enet Telecommunications Networks Limited	Yes	Content.
Environmental Protection Agency	No	-
ESB Networks	Yes	Further coordination required in order to avoid interference and degradation of ESB Links.
Fáilte Ireland	Yes	General comment and reference to guidance.
Gas Networks Ireland	No	-
Geological Survey of Ireland	Yes	Referral to datasets and mapping. Reference to Kilcormac Esker and mitigation.
Health and Safety Authority	Yes	No Comment at this stage.
Health Service Executive (Environmental Health Department)	Yes	Specific comment and guidance on EHS related topics.
Iarnród Éireann	No	-
Imagine Group	Yes	Content.

Consultee	Response	Summary of Feedback
Inland Fisheries Ireland	No	-
Irish Aviation Authority	Yes	Standard response setting out how IAA will respond to formal consultation request. Also advises that Birr Airfield/Ormand should be consulted.
Irish Peatland Conservation Council	No	-
Irish Raptor Study Group	No	-
Uisce Éireann - Irish Water	Yes	Advice and Guidance.
Irish Wildlife Trust	No	-
JFK Communications Ltd	No	-
Magnet+	No	-
National Ambulance Service	No	-
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	No	-
National Parks and Wildlife Service	No	-
Netshare Ireland	No	-
Sport Ireland Outdoors (National Trails Office)	No	-
Offaly County Council	No	-
Office of Public Works	No	-
Open Eir	No	-
Ormand Flying Club	No	-
Radio Services and Building Ltd	No	-
RTE Transmission Network Ltd (2rn)	Yes	Content.
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	No	-
Tetra Ireland Communications Ltd	Yes	Content.
The Arts Council	No	-
The Heritage Council	No	-
Three (3) Ireland	Yes	Content.
Towercom	No	-
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	Yes	Guidance and Items to be considered.
Údarás na Gaeltachta	No	-
Virgin Media Ireland	No	-
Viatel Ireland Ltd	No	-
Vodafone Ireland Ltd	Yes	Content.
Waterways Ireland	Yes	Do not have jurisdiction for this area.

Table 1.1: Summary of Written Consultations

1.7 PREPARATION OF THE EIAR

1.7.1 CONTENT

In accordance with the EIA Directive and national legislation, this EIAR includes the information required having regard to the specific characteristics of the project, including:

- a description of the project comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project;
- a description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;
- a description of the features of the project and/or mitigation measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce, and, if possible, offset, likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
- a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the Developer, which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the project on the environment;
- a non-technical summary of the information referred to above; and,
- any additional information specified in Annex IV of the EIA Directive relevant to the specific characteristics of the project and to the environmental features likely to be affected.

1.7.2 FORMAT & STRUCTURE

The EIAR is presented as two volumes, which should be read in conjunction with each other, as follows:

- **Volume I** comprises the main EIAR text and follows a 'grouped format' whereby each environmental factor or assessment topic is presented as a separate chapter. The EIA Directive prescribes the environmental factors which must be addressed, where relevant, in describing and assessing the likely significant effects of a project on the environment. These have been supplemented by additional assessment topics owing to the characteristics of the project under assessment, as follows:
 - Chapter 1: Introduction;
 - Chapter 2: Assessment of Project Alternatives;
 - Chapter 3: Description of the Project;
 - Chapter 4: Population & Human Health;
 - Chapter 5: Biodiversity;
 - Chapter 6: Land & Soils;
 - Chapter 7: Water;
 - Chapter 8: Air Quality;
 - Chapter 9: Climate;
 - Chapter 10: Landscape;
 - Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage;

- Chapter 12: Noise & Vibration;
- Chapter 13: Shadow Flicker;
- Chapter 14: Material Assets; and
- Chapter 15: Interactions of the Foregoing.
- **Volume II** comprises annexes, including technical data and reports, which support the assessments presented in Volume I and provide underlying technical evidence, where relevant.

A **Non-Technical Summary** of the EIAR is also provided as a separate standalone volume to facilitate public participation in the planning application and EIA process (see **Section 1.9**).

To provide a consistent approach and present clear, concise, unambiguous information, each chapter of this EIAR is organised to follow a similar basic structure, as follows:

- **The existing environment:** A description of the context, character, significance and sensitivity of the receiving (baseline) environment using standard descriptive methods, to inform the assessment of the likely significant effects of the project and the likely evolution of the environment in the absence of the project, i.e. the likely future receiving environment;
- **The likely significant effects of the project:** The likely effects arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, as appropriate. The assessment considers the 'do-nothing' scenario and the relevant assessment scenarios for the proposed turbine dimension range, as described in each specialist chapter. The significance of effects is determined having regard to the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the character, magnitude, intensity, duration and probability of the effects, using relevant topic-specific criteria; and
- **The measures to mitigate and monitor adverse effects:** The measures proposed to avoid, prevent or reduce likely significant adverse effects (including unplanned events) together with an assessment of residual effects following mitigation measures and, where appropriate, measures to offset such effects, and monitor the effectiveness of mitigation.

This standardised structure separates the description of the receiving environment and project from the assessment of likely significant effects, mitigation and residual effects, and facilitates the Competent Authority in its EIA of the project.

1.7.3 GUIDANCE

A range of guidance documents were considered in the preparation of this EIAR, including, *inter alia*:

- *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022);
- *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report* (European Commission, 2017);
- *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening* (European Commission, 2017);

- *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Scoping* (European Commission, 2017);
- *Interpretation of Definitions of Project Categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive* (European Commission, 2024);
- Commission Notice regarding application of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive to changes and extension of projects – Annex I.24 and Annex II.13(a), including main concepts and principles related to these (European Commission, 2021);
- *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment* (DHPCLG, 2018);
- *Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DEHLG, 2006);
- *Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines* (DHPCLG, 2019);
- *Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry* (IWEA, 2012);
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2018, version 1.3 updated September 2024); and,
- *Evidence-Based Environmental Studies* (EirGrid, various).

The above list is non-exhaustive. Additional guidance specific to each environmental factor or assessment topic is referenced in the relevant chapter of this EIAR, as appropriate.

This EIAR has also been prepared having regard to relevant principles established through national and European case law and, where appropriate, relevant practice in the preparation and assessment of EIARs for similar projects.

1.7.4 COMPETENCE

The EIA Directive requires that an EIAR is prepared by competent experts. The preparation of an EIAR therefore requires an appropriate combination of experience, expertise and knowledge having regard to the nature, significance and complexity of the likely effects of the project. Relevant competencies include prior experience and knowledge of the characteristics of the project type and sensitivities likely to be present in the receiving environment; an understanding of the legal and regulatory context of the EIA process; and the appropriate range of specialist technical expertise to assess the relevant environmental factors and their interactions.

GES was appointed by the Developer to manage and co-ordinate the preparation of this EIAR. GES is an Irish multi-disciplinary renewable energy consultancy that specialises in providing planning, environmental and technical engineering services for renewable energy developments from project feasibility through to delivery and operation.

GES combines expertise in wind farm design, planning and environmental assessment and has extensive experience in managing and coordinating the preparation of EIARs for wind energy and associated electricity grid and substation infrastructure developments. Examples of wind energy and ancillary projects managed by GES are provided at **Table 1.2** below.

The EIAR draws on the technical expertise, experience and objectivity of environmental specialists. These specialists characterise the existing environment,

evaluate its sensitivity and the likely significant effects of the project.

The 2001 Planning Regulations require that an EIAR includes the names of all experts contributing to the various environmental factors assessed, together with details of their competence, including, as appropriate, qualifications and experience.

An overview of the experts involved in the preparation of each chapter of this EIAR, together with their relevant qualifications and key environmental factors or assessment topics covered, is provided in **Table 1.3** below. Some specialisms were provided in-house by GES staff while, in other cases, external specialists were appointed to undertake individual assessments and prepare chapters on specific environmental topics.

Development	Planning Reference	Development Description	Status
Pinewoods Wind Farm, Co. Laois & Co. Kilkenny	County Laois Ref:16/260 (PL11.248518) County Kilkenny Ref:17/62 (PL10.248392)	Wind Farm comprising 11 no. wind turbines and associated ancillary infrastructure.	Permitted
Pinewoods Wind Farm Substation & Grid Connection, Co. Laois	ABP-308448-20	110kV electricity substation and ancillary electrical infrastructure and all associated site development works.	Permitted
Drumlins Park Wind Farm, Co. Monaghan	19/486	Wind Farm comprising 8 no. wind turbines and associated ancillary infrastructure.	Operational
Drumlins Park Wind Farm Substation & Grid Connection, Co. Monaghan	ABP-309119-21	110kV electricity substation and ancillary electrical infrastructure and all associated site development works.	Operational
Bracklyn Wind Farm, Substation & Grid Connection, Co. Westmeath & Co. Meath	ABP-311565-21	Wind Farm comprising 9 no. wind turbines and associated ancillary infrastructure including a 110kV electricity substation and approximately 6km of underground electricity line.	Permitted
White Hill Wind Farm, Co. Carlow & Co. Kilkenny	ABP-315365-22	Wind Farm comprising 7 no. wind turbines and all associated works.	Permitted
White Hill Wind Farm Substation & Grid Connection, County Carlow & County Kilkenny	ABP-322078-25	110kV electricity substation and 8.8km of underground electricity line	Permitted
Cush Wind Farm (Phase I), Co. Offaly.	ABP-318816-24	Wind Farm comprising 8 no. wind turbines and all associated works.	Permitted
Moyvannan Electricity Substation, County Roscommon	ABP-321238-24	110kV electricity substation and 7.5km of underground electricity line	Permitted

Table 1.2: Examples of EIAR Wind Energy Developments managed by GES

Each appointed specialist was selected having regard to their knowledge of relevant environmental legislation; their experience in the assessment of wind energy developments; familiarity with pertinent standards and criteria for the evaluation and

classification of the significance of effects; their ability to interpret technical documents and work with project designers to identify measures to avoid, prevent or reduce likely significant adverse environmental effects, together with appropriate monitoring measures; and their ability to clearly and comprehensively present their findings in a concise and objective manner.

A statement of competence for each specialist who contributed to the preparation of this EIAR is provided in the relevant chapter, as appropriate.

As part of its project management role, GES was responsible for the briefing and steering of specialist consultants throughout the iterative EIAR and design process; maintaining a two-way feedback loop between specialists and project designers, with the designers continually adjusting the design in response to assessments received from the specialists, and vice versa; identifying likely interactions between different environmental factors; and conducting overall editorial management of the EIAR to ensure consistency and cross-referencing between chapters and volumes.

Ch.	Environmental Factor/Topic	Consultant	Personnel/Credentials
1	Introduction	GES	Dr. Gavin Daly <i>PhD MIPI MIESP CEnv</i> Declan Owens <i>MIPI MSc BSc</i>
2	Assessment of Project Alternatives	GES	
3	Description of the Project	GES	
4	Population & Human Health	GES	
5	Biodiversity	SLR Consulting Ltd.	Dr. Jonathon Dunn <i>PhD MSc MAI, GIS, PDip IPM</i> Sinead Clifford <i>BSc CEC</i> Dr. Andrew Torsney <i>PhD MCIEEM</i>
		Triturus Environmental Ltd.	
6	Land & Soils	Hydro-Environmental Services Ltd.	Dr. Ross Macklin <i>PhD B.Sc. MCIEEM MIFM HDip</i> Michael Gill <i>P. Geo., B.A.I., MSc, Dip. Geol., MIEI</i> David Broderick <i>BSc, H.Dip Env Eng, MSc</i>
		Fehily Timoney & Company Ltd. (Peat Stability Assessment)	
7	Water	Hydro-Environmental Services Ltd.	Emily Archer <i>PGeo BSc MSc</i> Ian Higgins <i>BSc MSc</i>
8	Air Quality	AWN Consulting Ltd.	Michael Gill <i>P. Geo., B.A.I., MSc, Dip. Geol., MIEI</i> David Broderick <i>BSc, H.Dip Env Eng, MSc</i>
9	Climate	AWN Consulting Ltd.	Carl Ramskill <i>BSc MSc MEnvSc MIAQM</i>
10	Climate	AWN Consulting Ltd.	Mobin Ud Din <i>BEng MSc</i> Ciara O'Connor <i>BSc</i> Sarah Berry <i>BSc</i>
	Landscape	Macro Works Ltd.	Cian Doughan <i>MILI BSc</i> Jorden Derecourt <i>MILI BSc MSc</i>
		GES (Photomontages)	Joseph Buckley <i>BSc MSc</i>

			Cormac McPhillips BSc
11	Cultural Heritage	Horizon Archaeology Ltd.	Dermot Nelis BA ArchOxon AIFA MIAI
		Caitriona Moore Archaeology and Built Heritage (Peatland Field Survey)	Caitriona Moore MA PgDip MIAI
12	Noise & Vibration	AWN Consulting Ltd.	Mike Simms BE MEngSc MIOA MIET Miguel Cartuyvels BEng AMIOA Dermot Blunnie BEng MSc MIEI MIOA
		GES (noise monitoring)	Cormac McPhillips
13	Shadow Flicker	GES	Cormac McPhillips Gavin Daly Declan Owens
14	Material Assets	GES	Gavin Daly Declan Owens
		Pager Power Ltd. (Radio Telescope Impact Assessment)	Michael Sutton BSc Kai Frolic MInstP MPhys
15	Interaction of the Foregoing	GES	Gavin Daly Declan Owens
	Non-Technical Summary		

Table 1.3: Specialist Consultants involved in the preparation of this EIAR

1.8 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This EIAR focuses on the assessment of environmental effects that are both likely and significant having regard to the individual environmental factors and their sensitivities. The impact classification and terminology described in the *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022) are used to provide a consistent approach to describing and classifying effects. Additional guidance, legislation and technical standards pertinent to particular environmental factors or assessment topics are identified in the relevant chapters of this EIAR, as necessary.

Within this EIAR, a distinction is drawn between ‘impacts’ and ‘effects’. In accordance with the *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (CIEEM, 2024), an ‘impact’ is an action resulting in changes to the environment (e.g. the removal of a hedgerow during construction). An ‘effect’ is the consequence of an impact (e.g. a change in habitat availability resulting from the loss of a hedgerow). The effect arising from an impact may, or may not, be significant. As the purpose of this EIAR is to report the significant effects, if any, which the project is likely to have on the environment, the term ‘effects’ is generally used throughout this EIAR.

Significance is a concept related to the weight attached to effects when decisions are made. The criteria used to determine the significance of effects are described in the relevant chapters of this EIAR.

1.8.2 CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

This EIAR assesses the likely significant cumulative effects of the project, in combination

with other relevant existing, permitted and proposed developments.

To inform the cumulative assessment, a desktop review of available data sources (e.g. satellite imagery) was undertaken to identify existing developments in the wider area. The EIA Portal was reviewed to identify relevant developments which have been subject to EIA.

The online ePlan portals for Offaly County Council and Tipperary County Council were also reviewed to identify relevant existing, permitted and proposed developments. Developments considered include residential, agricultural, forestry, quarrying, energy and other infrastructure developments. **Table 1.4** identifies the developments considered for the purposes of cumulative assessment.

Given the direct relationship between the project and the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I development, the cumulative assessment has had particular regard to the Cush Wind Farm Phase I and the current Section 146B request to alter the permitted development to provide for design flexibility in respect of the permitted turbine dimensions (see **Section 1.8.3**).

The proposed wind farm is located on Galros Bog, which is subject to a separate programme of peatland rehabilitation being undertaken by Bord na Móna pursuant to its PC Licence (P0500-01). The project has been designed to integrate with the rehabilitation of Galros Bog, as set out in the *Galros Bog Draft Cutaway Bog Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan (2026)*. Given the spatial and functional relationship between these activities, the rehabilitation of Galros Bog has also been specifically considered as part of the cumulative assessment.

Development	Planning Reference	Development Description	Status
Cush Wind Farm -Phase I, Co. Offaly	ABP-318816-24	8 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure.	Permitted
Cush Wind Farm - Phase I Section 146B Alteration Request, Co. Offaly.	ACP-324405-26	Request to alter the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I development to provide for design flexibility in respect of the permitted turbine dimensions.	Proposed
Loughnane Concrete (Loughnane Concrete Ltd), Co. Offaly	82/662, 94/13, 95/519, 96/251, 97/384	Quarry, concrete batching plant and all associated plant and machinery	Existing
Smyths Sand & Gravel Co. Offaly	06/13 (PL19.221091)/1030	Quarry, concrete batching plant and all associated plant and machinery	Existing
Derrinlough Briquette Factory Co. Offaly	88/274, 09/399,14/251	Briquette factory with all associated infrastructure.	Existing
Cloghan Wind Farm Co. Offaly	14/188 (PL19.244053) 19/404	9 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure.	Existing
Cloghan Wind Farm Grid Connection Co. Offaly	19/555	Approximately 8km of underground electricity cables.	Existing
Meenwaun Wind Farm Co. Offaly	15/44 (PL19.244903)	4 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure	Existing
Leabeg Wind Farm Co. Offaly	10/130,14/95	2 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure	Existing
Skehanagh and Carrig Wind Farms Co. Tipperary	5123495, 5123496	5 & 3 (8 total) no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure	Existing
Carrig Renewables Wind Farm	23/60763 (PL92.318689)	7 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure	Permitted

Co. Tipperary Carrig Renewables Wind Farm Grid Connection, Co. Tipperary & Co. Offaly.	23/60140	The development will consist of: (i) The provision of underground electrical cabling (38kV) from the townland of Townparks to the existing Dallow 110kV substation in the townland of Clondallow to facilitate the connection of the proposed Carrig Renewables Wind Farm.	Permitted
Derrinlough Wind Farm Co. Offaly	ABP-306706-20	21 no. wind turbines and all associated infrastructure.	Existing
Derrinlough Wind Farm Co. Offaly	FMR 26/01	Request for Opinion on Unconfirmed Details for a Proposed Battery Energy Storage System, consisting of battery container units, transformers, inverters, underground cabling, associated control rooms, access routes, lighting, CCTV, lightning masts, fencing and grid connection to the existing Derrinlough 110kV substation.	Proposed
Ballincor Wind Farm, Co. Tipperary	PAX92.324279	10-year permission for the proposed construction of the Ballincor Wind Farm and all associated infrastructure.	Proposed
Lea Mor Renewable Energy Community Wind Turbine	24/60326 (ABP- 321244-24)	Single wind turbine, substation and associated development.	Permitted.
Summit Solar Ltd Solar Farm Clonbeale Beg Glebe, Rathnure North, Parkmore, Cultree, Rathmount, Mullanafawnia, and Russellspenn, Co. Offaly.	20/476, 21/622, 22/368	Solar Farm Development.	Permitted
JCO Limited 110kV substation Mullanafawnia, Co. Offaly.	ACP-324608-26	Pre Application Consultation Reference for 110kV electricity substation.	Proposed
Solar Farm Ballindown, Bogderries, Ballywilliam, and Ballynaguilsha, Co. Offaly.	21/227	Solar Farm Development.	Permitted
Solar Farm Dovehill, Gortnamuck, Curraghmore (Eglish By), and Feagh, Co. Offaly.	23/74	Solar Farm Development.	Permitted
Derrycarney Solar Farm Lumcloon, Bun, Derrycarney, Falsk, Derries Rin, Lea Beg, and Lea More, Co. Offaly.	23/20 (ABP-316303- 23)	Solar Farm Development.	Permitted
Solar Farm Stonestown, Kilcamin,	26/60237	Solar Farm Development.	Proposed

Crancreagh, and Derrinlough, Co. Offaly.			
Telecommunications Mast, Boolinarg Big Co. Offaly	13/247	1 no. 24m telecoms mast, access track and all ancillary works.	Existing
Telecommunications Mast, Clooneen Co. Offaly	13/69 (PL19.242181)	1 no. 30m telecoms mast, access track and all ancillary works.	Existing
Abattoir Facility (Banagher Chilling Ltd) Co. Offaly	19/325 (ABP-308004-20)	Upgrade and extension of an existing abattoir facility.	Permitted
Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) & Synchronous Condenser, Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly.	22/223	Demolition of existing ESB WOP Station and development/operation of a BESS & Synchronous Condenser.	Permitted
Agricultural Developments	Various	Various	Existing, Permitted and Proposed
Residential Dwellings	Various	Various	Existing, Permitted and Proposed
Commercial Forestry Plantations	-	-	Existing
Bord na Móna Operations	Various	Various	Existing
Bord na Móna - Galros Bog Rehabilitation	IPC Licence P0500-01	Peatland rehabilitation pursuant to IPC Licence P0500-01. Existing/proposed rehabilitation works.	Existing/Proposed

Table 1.4: Developments considered in cumulative impact assessment

1.8.3 ASSESSMENT OF UNCONFIRMED DETAILS

Wind turbine technology continues to evolve and, given the lead-in period between the submission of the planning application and construction, turbine models currently available may be superseded or no longer commercially available when the project is constructed.

Section 32H of the 2000 Planning Act allows a planning application to be made and decided before certain details of a proposed development are confirmed, where the Planning Authority has issued an Opinion that it is appropriate for those details to remain unconfirmed at the application stage.

The Developer submitted a request for an Opinion on unconfirmed details in March 2026. In making the request, the Developer was required to give an undertaking that any subsequent planning application would include the turbine dimension parameters within which those unconfirmed details would fall (see **Annex 1.3**). A meeting was held with the Planning Authority to discuss the request and a record of the minutes of that meeting is included at **Annex 1.4**.

Offaly County Council subsequently issued an Opinion confirming that it would be appropriate for the planning application to be made and decided before the final turbine dimensions were confirmed, subject their falling within the parameter range identified in that Opinion (**Annex 1.5**).

Different turbine dimensions and characteristics have the potential to influence

different environmental effects. Accordingly, there is no single turbine dimension or combination of dimensions which necessarily represents the greatest potential environmental effect across all assessment topics. For example, the turbine configuration relevant to the assessment of bats may differ from that relevant to noise, landscape, shadow flicker or turbine delivery.

Turbine Component	Dimension (m)	
	Minimum	Maximum
Hub Height	111.6	120.9
Rotor Diameter	158	175
Tip Height	199.1	200

Table 1.5: Confirmed Design Flexibility Range Details

To ensure a comprehensive assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the project in circumstances where the final turbine dimensions are not yet confirmed, the assessment has been undertaken on a topic-specific basis having regard to the turbine dimensions, configurations or other relevant turbine parameters considered appropriate for assessing the likely significant environmental effects within each chapter. The selection of these dimensions, configurations and parameters was informed by the advice and professional judgement of the specialist consultants responsible for preparing the respective chapters.

Depending on the specific chapter, the approach adopted may involve assessing specific turbine configurations within the proposed dimension range, comparing a number of configurations, or considering other relevant turbine characteristics, such as sound power levels or electrical output. For construction-related effects, the assessment may instead be based on the maximum assumed physical footprint of the relevant infrastructure, including turbine foundations and crane hardstands, where these parameters are more relevant than the turbine dimensions themselves.

Table 1.6 identifies the turbine dimensions or other relevant parameters assessed within each EIAR chapter, together with a summary of the basis for their selection. The assessment methodology and assumptions are described in further detail in the relevant specialist chapters.

It should be noted that a separate Section 146B request has been submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála in respect of the permitted Cush Wind Farm Phase I development to alter the terms of the permission to provide for a comparable turbine dimension range (ACP-324405-26). Where appropriate, the turbine dimensions and configurations assessed in each chapter have been considered cumulatively with the proposed altered turbine dimension ranges for Cush Wind Farm Phase I, as discussed in **Section 1.8.2** above.

EIAR Chapter	Hub	Rotor	Tip	Basis of Assessment
Chapter 4: Population & Human	—	—	—	Assessment is not dependent on specific turbine dimensions or configuration
Chapter 5: Biodiversity: Habitats	114	172	200	Maximum assumed physical footprint
Chapter 5: Biodiversity: Bats	111.6	175	199.1	175m rotor-diameter permutation, representing the lowest lower blade-tip height and assessed for bat survey extent and buffer requirements.
	120.9	158	199.9	158m rotor-diameter permutation, representing the highest lower blade-tip height and assessed for bat survey extent and buffer requirements.
Chapter 5: Biodiversity: Birds	111.6	175	199.1	175m rotor diameter permutation assessed through Collision Risk Modelling.
	120.9	158	199.9	158m rotor diameter permutation assessed through Collision Risk Modelling. The configuration producing the higher or lower collision estimate varies according to the bird species assessed.
Chapter 6: Land and Soil	114	172	200	Maximum assumed physical footprint
Chapter 7: Water	114	172	200	Maximum assumed physical footprint
Chapter 8: Air Quality	114	172	200	Maximum assumed physical footprint
Chapter 9: Climate	Various	Various	Various	Construction phase assessed using the maximum assumed construction footprint and associated construction quantities. Operation phase assessed using annual electricity generation of 48.3–55.1 GWh, calculated using configuration-specific capacity factors.
Chapter 10: Landscape	118	164	200	Principal specimen turbine used for photomontages
	111.6	175	199.1	Alternative turbine configuration considered in the visual assessment
	120.9	158	199.9	Alternative turbine configuration considered in the visual assessment
Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage	114	172	200	Maximum assumed physical footprint
Chapter 12: Noise & Vibration	114*	172*	200*	Construction Phase assessment based on maximum assumed construction footprint. *Operation Phase noise assessed using a conservative combined maximum sound power profile across candidate turbine technologies and relevant wind speeds.
Chapter 13: Shadow Flicker	111.6	175	199.1	Principal turbine configuration assessed for shadow flicker
	118	164	200	Alternative turbine configuration assessed for shadow flicker
	120.9	158	199.9	Alternative turbine configuration assessed for shadow flicker
Chapter 14: Material Assets: Turbine Delivery	111.6	175	199.1	Longest turbine blade configuration, relevant to abnormal load transportation
Chapter 14: Material Assets: Construction Traffic	114	172	200	Maximum assumed construction footprint, associated with construction material requirements
Chapter 14: Material Assets: Aviation, Telecommunications & Utilities	Various	Various	Various	Relevant turbine dimensions and parameters considered for each assessment

Table 1.6: Assessment of Turbine Dimension Ranges (Metres)

1.8.4 MITIGATION & MONITORING MEASURES

Each chapter of the EIAR includes a description of the measures proposed to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset, as appropriate, any likely significant adverse effects on the environment, together with monitoring measures where appropriate.

Anticipation of effects is the most effective means of avoiding likely significant adverse effects. Many mitigation measures have therefore been incorporated into the project design at an early stage, through iterative scoping and impact assessment, and the adoption of good practices. These measures constitute 'mitigation by design' or 'embedded mitigation'. Monitoring measures have also been proposed, where appropriate, to verify the implementation and effectiveness of the mitigation measures.

For clarity, the mitigation and monitoring measures identified in this EIAR are compiled in a compendium at **Annex 1.9**. The Developer is committed to implementing the mitigation and monitoring measures set out in this EIAR.

1.9 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

A non-technical summary (NTS) of the EIAR is specifically required by the EIA Directive to provide the public with an accessible summary of the information contained in the EIAR.

The NTS has therefore been prepared as a separate and self-contained document. It provides a concise description of the project, existing environment, likely significant effects, and mitigation and monitoring measures using non-technical language and a format accessible to the general public.

The NTS facilitates public participation in the statutory planning application process following submission of the planning application to Offaly County Council.

1.10 PUBLIC ACCESS

Prior to submission of the planning application, a newspaper notice was published and site notices erected in accordance with the 2000 Planning Act and Planning Regulations. The public notices provide information on how the planning application and EIAR may be accessed and how submissions or observations may be made to Offaly County Council.

Offaly County Council will make the planning application documentation, including this EIAR, available for public inspection in accordance with the Planning Regulations, including at:

- Offaly County Council, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, County Offaly, R35 F893.

The EIA Portal, managed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, is a publicly accessible portal containing information on applications for development consent which are subject to EIA. Following submission of the planning application, relevant information will be made available through the EIA Portal in accordance with the Planning Regulations. The EIAR will be provided in electronic form searchable by electronic means, as far as practicable.

The Developer has provided a dedicated planning application website containing planning application documentation, including this EIAR, at: www.cushwindfarmplanning.ie.

1.11 HABITATS DIRECTIVE

In addition to EIA, the project is subject to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). AA is a separate but parallel process to EIA for the assessment of effects on European sites. Where AA is required, development consent may only be granted where the Competent Authority has ascertained, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site.

1.11.1.1 AA Screening

The first stage of the AA process is screening to determine whether the project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, having regard to its conservation objectives. If AA is required, the Developer is required to submit a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to inform the AA undertaken by the Competent Authority.

The Developer has prepared an AA Screening Report which concluded that, in accordance with the 'precautionary principle', likely significant effects on European sites could not be excluded on the basis of objective information and in the absence of mitigation measures, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, having regard to their conservation objectives. As a result, it was concluded that the project should be subject to AA and that a NIS should be prepared and submitted with the planning application alongside this EIAR.

1.11.1.2 Natura Impact Statement

The NIS is presented as a separate standalone document and accompanies the planning application and this EIAR. The NIS provides the information necessary to inform the Stage 2 AA to be undertaken by the Competent Authority.

The Biodiversity chapter of this EIAR (**Chapter 5**) does not repeat the detailed assessment included in the NIS but cross-refers to the NIS, as appropriate, in accordance with the EPA guidance (2022).

1.12 WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The project has been assessed having regard to the requirements of Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy ('the Water Framework Directive' or 'WFD'). The assessment considers the potential effects of the project on relevant surface water and groundwater bodies and whether it could result in deterioration in water body status or otherwise compromise the achievement of the environmental objectives of the WFD.

A WFD Compliance Assessment Report has been prepared and accompanies this EIAR at **Annex 7.3**. The findings of the assessment are also summarised in **Chapter 7**.

1.13 LIMITATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

No material difficulties or limitations, including technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge, were encountered in compiling the information required for inclusion in this EIAR. Where specific difficulties or limitations were encountered in relation to individual environmental factors or assessment topics, they are identified in the relevant chapters of this EIAR, as appropriate.

1.14 NOTE ON QUOTATIONS

This EIAR should be read as a whole, with individual statements considered in the context of the relevant assessment and its overall findings. Selective quotation, out of context, may not be representative of the findings of the EIAR and, therefore, any quotations should be considered in their proper context.