



Volume 1: Planning Statement

Gortnalug 110KV Substation and Grid Connection

24/03/2026



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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1. Neo Environmental Ltd has been appointed by Renewable Energy Systems on behalf of Ballydonagh Solar Limited (the “Applicant”) to undertake a Planning Statement for a new 110kV Air insulated substation (AIS) and grid connection with associated infrastructure(the “Development”) on lands at Ballydonagh, Kiltormer, Co. Galway, Ireland (the “Application Site”).
- 1.2. The method of connection to the national grid will be a new 110 kV AIS Loop-in station (Gortnalug) with a ‘Loop-in/Loop out’ connection into the existing Ennis-Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit. Ballydonagh Solar Limited accepted the Eirgrid Connection Offer (P602-CA-OL) in December 2025.
- 1.3. The Proposed Development comprises a 110kV AIS and associated grid connection infrastructure to facilitate the connection of the permitted Ballydonagh Solar Farm under Ref 2361049, as amended under Ref 25/61903 and Ballydonagh Solar Farm Extension under Ref 2461749, as amended under 26/60009, to the national grid. The applicant is seeking a ten-year permission from the date of consent of the 110kV Substation.
- 1.4. Please see **Figure 300101338-DR-100 Overall Site Layout** for the layout of the Proposed Development.

Development Description

- 1.5. The Proposed Development comprises a 110kV Air Insulated Substation and associated grid connection infrastructure to facilitate the connection of the permitted Ballydonagh Solar Farm under Ref 2361049, as amended under Ref 25/61903 and Ballydonagh Extension Solar Farm under Ref 2461749 , as amended under 26/60009, to the national grid, which revised the approved solar layout to accommodate the Gortnalug substation and grid connection infrastructure.
- 1.6. The Proposed Development comprises a 110kV Air Insulated loop in/ loop out electricity substation (11,300m²) consisting of EirGrid control building (25m x 18m), customer control building (23.1m x 10.8m),110kV bay arrangement, busbar infrastructure foundations, transformer, lightening masts, telecoms pole, CCTV, lighting columns, capacitor bank, reactor bank, harmonic filter, rural supply kiosk, house transformer, neutral earth resistor, resistor, stand by generator, compound roads, drainage, parking and hardstanding, palisade fence and gates.
- 1.7. The grid connection will consist of the removal of c.248m of the existing overhead line and poles from Ennis-Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit and the erection of two new towers

(16m height) and c.975m of double 110kV underground circuit and tracks into the proposed substation.

- 1.8. Remaining associated infrastructure consists of entrance; perimeter fencing, access tracks (1907m) (upgraded and localised widening) with water crossings, deposition areas (4,300m²), temporary construction compound; and all associated and ancillary site development, excavation, construction, landscaping and reinstatement works and the provision of site drainage.

Site Description

- 1.9. The area of the proposed Development (the “Application Site”) lies at an elevation of approximately 76.51 – 96.56m AOD and covers a total area of c. 34.8 hectares. It is centred at approximate Irish National Grid Reference (NGR) E 183907 N 220547 and is located in the lands north of the L4301.
- 1.10. The site comprises 13 field parcels of agricultural land, the site is currently being used for pastoral farming. The Application Site is bound by a mixture of trees, hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing. Access will be gained from the south gate entrance from a private lane to an unnamed local road off the L4301 to the southeast of the site.
- 1.11. The surrounding context is predominately agriculture with pockets of forestry and peatland and punctuated by individual properties, farmsteads and ribbon development associated with the minor and regional road network. Fields are typically small to medium in scale and similar in character to the Application Site lands.

Strategic Infrastructure Development Closure Letter

- 1.12. A Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) closure letter was received from An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) on 26th February 2026 which is included as part of the application package. This letter marks the closure of the pre-application consultation process, in respect of the Proposed Development, under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Furthermore, the letter outlined that ACP consider the Proposed Development to fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, meaning that the Proposed Development is deemed to be a SID, and that a planning application should therefore be made directly to ACP.

Scope of Planning Statement and Associated Documents

- 1.13. The purpose of this Statement is to outline the Planning merit of the Proposed Development within a context of best practice guidance, legislation and National and County Planning Policy

and should be read in conjunction with the following documentation that accompanies the subject application:

- **Planning forms**
 - Application Form
 - Landowner Letters of Consent;
 - Applicant consent to agent;
 - Site notice;
 - Newspaper advert (Local and National); and
 - Cover Letter;
 - Letters to Prescribed Bodies;
 - SID Determination Letter;
 - Schedule of Pre-App Consultation; and
 - Drawing Schedule.
- **Vol 1**
 - Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
 - Planning Statement
 - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening
- **Vol 2**
 - Planning Drawings
- **Vol 3 – Technical Appendices**
 - Technical Appendix 1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
 - Technical Appendix 2: Ecological Impact Assessment
 - Technical Appendix 3: Archaeology and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Technical Appendix 4: Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment

- Technical Appendix 5: Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Technical Appendix 6: Noise Impact Assessment (RES)
- Technical Appendix 7: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Outline Construction Methodology (TLI Group)
- Abnormal Indivisible Load Route Survey (Pell Firschmann)
- Acoustic Impact Assessment (Renewable Energy Systems)

2. CONTEXT

Application Context

2.1. The purpose of the Proposed Development is to transport the electricity generated at the permitted Ballydonagh Solar Farms to the national electricity grid via a new 110 kV AIS Loop-in station (Gortnalug) with a 'Loop-in/Loop out' connection into the existing Ennis- Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit. The planning status of those solar farms is set out below:

- **Original Application** - An application (Planning Application Reference: 23/61049) for an 81.9 hectare solar farm on lands at Ballydonagh, Cloonineen, Skeoor, Kiltormer East and Graveshill was validated on 5th September 2023. Further information was requested on 27th November 2023 and submitted on 3rd July 2024. Galway County Council decided to grant permission on 27th August 2024, subject to conditions. A final grant was issued on 7th October 2024 after the appeal period ended.
- **Extension application** – An application (Planning Application Reference: 2461749) for a 56.2 hectare extension (lands at Ballydonagh, Cloonineen, Skeoor, Lisheenaguil and Kiltormer East) was validated on 17th December 2024. Further information was requested on 17th February 2025 and provided on 2nd April 2025. Galway County Council granted permission on 27th May subject to conditions. A final grant was issued on 8th July 2025 after the appeal period ended.
- **Amendment to original permission** – An amendment application (Planning Application Reference: 2561903) to Planning Application Reference 23/61049 was validated on 19th December 2025. Galway County Council decided to grant permission on 20th February 2026, subject to conditions. The appeal period remains open and a final grant has not yet been issued.
- **Amendment to extension** – An amendment application (Planning Application Reference: 2660009) to Planning Application Reference 2461749 (the extension) was validated on 8th January 2026. Galway County Council decided to grant permission on 4th March 2026, subject to conditions. The appeal period remains open and a final grant has not yet been issued.

2.2. The planning history summarised above establish the principle of renewable energy development in this area. The Proposed Development seeks only the remaining infrastructure required to export the approved solar output to the national grid – a new 110kV air insulated

substation and associated connection works – and is supported by the documentation and technical assessments that accompany this application.

Site Context

- 2.3. The area of the proposed Development (the “Application Site”) lies at an elevation of approximately 76.51 – 96.56m AOD and covers a total area of c. 34.8 hectares. The proposed substation area is c.2.76acres and lies at an elevation of 82.2 – 87.4m AOD. The site lies within the boundary of the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm. The approximate Irish Grid Reference points (ITM) of the proposed substation are X 583891 and Y 720775.
- 2.4. The site comprises 13 field parcels of agricultural land, the site is currently being used for pastoral farming. Predominantly improved grassland with pockets of wet grassland and scrub and an existing track and is bound by a mixture of trees, hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing and roadway. Access will be from the L4301 which is the same entrance point as the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm (PA Ref: 23/61049).
- 2.5. The surrounding context is predominately agriculture with pockets of forestry and peatland and punctuated by individual properties, farmsteads and ribbon development associated with the minor and regional road network. Fields are typically small to medium in scale and similar in character to the Application Site lands.
- 2.6. The existing OHL Ennis - Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit is located in the southeast and southwest fields of the application site and runs in a south westerly direction.

Planning History

- 2.7. A review of Galway County Council's planning records was undertaken in March 2026 to identify any existing, approved, or proposed solar farm developments and other relevant projects within a 5km study area of the application site. Some of these developments relate to the Proposed Development, as listed above. This review aims to assess any potential significant cumulative effects arising from these developments and the one proposed.
- 2.8. The search revealed that there are two solar farms applications located within the study area (Ballydonagh Solar Farm and extension) and two amendment applications for these solar farm applications. Additionally, there is one Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) application, two Substation applications and one Wind Farm application. These developments are detailed in **Table 1** below. All developments in **Table 1** were taken into consideration as part of the cumulative assessment undertaken, which found that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts in-combination with these developments.

Table 2-1: Nearby renewable energy and other relevant applications

Planning Reference	Planning Status	Description	Direction and Distance from the Application Site
74030	Conditional	Development of 38kv line from existing Somerset 110kv Station to a point on the existing 38 kv line at Glenloughaun.	3.250 km North
932	Conditional	Development of ESB Somerset 110KV station which consists of alterations to the existing 110 KV station and associated site works.	3.240 km North
151571	Unconditional	Development of Wind Farm and associated works.	1.220 km North
2360827	Conditional	Development of a 40MWh battery energy storage systems facility, and associated infrastructure, within a total site area of up to 3.02 hectares.	3.120 km North
2361049	Conditional	Development of a solar farm on a total site area of circa 81.9 hectares.	0.000 km
2461749	Conditional	Development of a solar farm on a total site area of circa 56.2 hectares.	0.000 km
2561903	Conditional	Amendments to previously consented PA ref 2361049 (as above)	0.000 km
266009	Condition	Amendments to previously consented PA ref 2461749 (as above)	0.0000 km

Site Selection Process

- 2.9. The application site, located within the townlands of Ballydonagh, Kiltormer, Co. Galway, forms part of lands already subject to extant planning permissions for the Ballydonagh Solar Farm developments (as set out above). In this regard, the principle of energy infrastructure at this location has been firmly established through the previous grant of permission, including the acceptance of renewable energy generation and associated ancillary works within this landscape.

- 2.10. The siting of the proposed substation and associated grid connection infrastructure within the previously permitted development envelope represents a logical and integrated extension of the established planning context. The use of these lands avoids the introduction of new development into unassessed areas and reflects a consolidation of infrastructure within a location already deemed acceptable in planning and environmental terms.
- 2.11. The proposed development is intrinsically linked to, and functionally dependent on, the permitted solar farms, with its location facilitating a direct and efficient connection between the generating stations and the national grid. This co-location minimises the extent of additional cabling and associated works, thereby reducing land disturbance and avoiding unnecessary environmental effects beyond those already considered under the parent permissions.
- 2.12. In this regard, the proposed development accords with established planning principles of sustainable infrastructure delivery, whereby ancillary and enabling infrastructure is co-located with approved development. It also supports national and regional renewable energy policy objectives by enabling the connection of permitted renewable energy projects to the electricity network, thereby contributing to the decarbonisation of energy supply while building upon an already established planning approval framework.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. Galway County Council will be aware of the background to the 2No. Solar Farms and subsequent amendment application which are registered under **Planning Reference 23/61049** (Amendment application - **2561903**) and **2461749** (Amendment application – **2660009**). The proposed entrance will be from the L4301 which is the same entrance point as the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm (PA Ref: 23/61049).
- 3.2. Early in the project process, it was understood that the proposed substation and grid connection may constitute ‘strategic infrastructure development’ under the provisions of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006. The Act stipulates that applications for permission for strategic infrastructure developments be made directly to Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP). The applicant made a request to ACP, on 26th September 2025, to enter into pre-application consultations under Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended and a virtual meeting was held on 13th January 2026. Following this meeting, 26th February 2026, ACP confirmed their opinion that the Proposed Development met the definition of ‘strategic infrastructure development’ as defined in the legislation, and that a planning application should therefore be made directly to ACP. This application is made in accordance with this determination.
- 3.3. Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (updated 16 July 2021) lists various energy and transmission development types which require a SID application.
- 3.4. The characteristics of the proposed infrastructure are as follows:
- New 110 kV AIS Loop-in station (Gortnalug) on the Ennis- Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit. This type of connection is not listed within the Section 37A of the Planning & Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 or Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (updated 16 July 2021).
 - The grid connection would be classed as “transmission” electricity based on the definition Section 182A (9a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (updated 16th July 2001) “as the high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more”.
 - Proposed development site lies entirely within the Galway County Council boundary
 - The Substation and grid route does not lie within any designated areas;
 - The substation and grid connection will be consented and built to facilitate the connection of Ballydonagh Solar Farm (PA Ref: 23/61049) and Ballydonagh Extension (PA Ref: 24/61749) to the transmission system and once energised the substation and grid connection will be handed over to EirGrid and it will become part of the National

Electricity Network. As per EirGrid requirements, sufficient space is available adjacent the Gortnalug substation for potential future expansion of the substation to an No.8 bay site (not part of this SID Screening).

- The substation and cable proposed are not a critical link for other strategic developments in the area and;
- All equipment proposed is standard and meets EirGrid functional specifications.

3.5. Based on environmental assessments, the scale and type of development are in line with the criteria outlined in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (updated 16 July 2021). It is therefore anticipated that the proposed infrastructure will require a Strategic Infrastructure Development planning application.

4. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

- 4.1. This Section provides a detailed breakdown and description of the design of the Proposed Development.
- 4.2. The Proposed Development comprises a 110kV Air Insulated loop in/ loop out electricity substation (11,300m²) consisting of EirGrid control building (25m x 18m), customer control building (23.1m x 10.8m), 110kV bay arrangement, busbar infrastructure foundations, transformer, lightning masts, telecoms pole, CCTV, lighting columns, capacitor bank, reactor bank, harmonic filter, rural supply kiosk, house transformer, neutral earth resistor, resistor, stand by generator, compound roads, drainage, parking and hardstanding, palisade fence and gates.
- 4.3. The grid connection will consist of the removal of c.248m of the existing overhead line and poles from Ennis-Agannygal-Shannonbridge 110kV circuit and the erection of two new towers (16m height) and c.975m of double 110kV underground circuit and tracks into the proposed substation.
- 4.4. Remaining associated infrastructure consists of entrance; perimeter fencing, access tracks (1907m) (upgraded and localised widening) with water crossings, deposition areas (4,300m²), temporary construction compound; and all associated and ancillary site development, excavation, construction, landscaping and reinstatement works and the provision of site drainage.
- 4.5. Details of all infrastructure are illustrated in each of the **Planning Drawings** which are located within **Volume 2** of this application.

Ground Disturbance

- 4.6. Overall, the proposed footprint constitutes a relatively small percentage of the total area of the Application Site (34.8ha):
- 29,079.6m² for infrastructure (c. 8.36% of the Application Site area); and
- 4.7. The total ground disturbance area resulting from the Proposed Development is therefore 29,090.8m² or c. 8.36% of the Application Site area.

5. CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND DECOMMISSIONING

5.1. This Section will provide a brief summary on the construction, operation and decommissioning process associated with the Proposed Development.

Construction

5.2. Construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to occur over a 14-month period. During this period, there will be a combination of HGVs (for the component and material deliveries) and cars/vans (for construction staff) on site. HGV movements are expected to be the most intense during the first few weeks of construction, reducing in numbers towards the final weeks. Car/van movements are expected to be constant throughout.

5.3. The following activities will be undertaken during the construction phase:

- Erecting construction traffic signage;
- Creation of internal site tracks and ditch/ watercrossings;
- Erecting security fence;
- Erecting temporary construction compound;
- Site preparation, including mowing and marking out if required;
- bulk excavation works for the substation hardstanding to achieve an earthworks design using cut and fill methodologies to achieve a level area;
- local excavation works may also be required within the substation compound in addition to the bulk excavation works stated above for the building and equipment foundations, fencing, CCTV, drainage and associated buried earthing / cables trenches;
- Constructing the permeable pad for the grid compound;
- Erecting of steel cable masts;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) installation;
- Cable route trenching and cable laying;
- Concrete base formation for the buildings and associated above ground infrastructure;

- Building of above ground infrastructure;
 - Removal of construction compound; and
 - Installation of ecological and landscape measures as outlined within the supporting Ecology and Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP), please see **Figure 1.14, Appendix 1A of Technical Appendix 1: Landscape and Visual Assessment.**
- 5.4. Please note, however, that many of these tasks will take place concurrently in order to limit the construction phase as far as is reasonably possible.
- 5.5. It is anticipated that a total of 558 HGV deliveries will be made to the site. During the peak construction period there will be an estimated maximum of 15 daily HGV deliveries.
- 5.6. All traffic movements will be carried out between the hours of 07.00 to 19.00 on Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 16.00 on Saturdays. Outside of these times works are limited to:
- Abnormal loads will likely be delivered outside of these times and will be subject to prior approval with the Council;
 - Testing of equipment; and
 - Works required in an emergency where there is the potential of harm or damage to personnel, plant, equipment, or the environment, provided the developer retrospectively notifies Galway County Council of such works within 24 hours of their occurrence.
- 5.7. Deliveries will also be scheduled to avoid peak times where relevant, e.g. avoiding rush hours and after school pick up times.

Operation and Maintenance

- 5.8. The Proposed Development will operate as a permanent component of the national grid infrastructure, facilitating the reliable connection and transmission of electricity from the solar farms. Maintenance activities will occur on an as needed basis typically involving qualified personnel conducting annual checks on equipment such as switchgear, transformers and control systems to ensure safe, reliable and efficient performance. These works will be carried out in accordance with the relevant standards.

Decommissioning

- 5.9. The Proposed Development forms an integral and permanent part of Ireland's national electricity grid infrastructure, supporting the long-term integration of renewable energy developments into the national grid, so no decommissioning is anticipated or proposed. The

Proposed Development will be maintained, upgraded and adapted as necessary over its indefinite operational lifespan to meet evolving grid connection requirements and technological advancements, ensuring continued contribution to national energy security and sustainability goals.

6. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1. This section of the Planning Statement will outline the Global, European, National, Regional and Local Planning Policy contexts that are considered relevant to the Proposed Development.

Global Context

- 6.2. The 2005 'Kyoto Protocol' provided a framework for international action on climate change at a global level. As part of this, Ireland committed themselves to legally binding targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Ireland was party to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015, signifying their intent to play a proactive part in the long-term emissions reduction goal that aspires to net-zero emissions after 2050 via the Paris Agreement.

European Context

Renewable Energy Directive¹

- 6.3. The Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC committed Member States to setting their own targets within a context of an overarching EU target of producing 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. However, the European Commission has since published a revised Renewable Energy Directive to make the EU a global leader in renewable energy and ensure that the target of at least 27% renewables in the final energy consumption in the EU by 2030 is met. This target is binding at EU level and will be fulfilled through individual Member States' contributions guided by the need to deliver collectively for the EU.
- 6.4. The 2030 targets provided under the EU Effort Sharing Regulations 2018 set by each EU member state range from 0% to 40% reduction in Green House Gas emissions compared to 2005 levels, factoring in a flexibility which depends on their GDP per capita in the interests of fairness and cost-effectiveness.
- 6.5. The latest amendment to the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) entered force in November 2023 (EU/2023/2413) which set an overall renewable energy target of at least 42.5% binding at EU level by 2030 but aiming for 45%. Several provisions of this directive were adopted into Irish law in August 2025 under The European Union (Planning and Development) (Renewable Energy) Regulations 2025, including measures to speed up and simplify renewable infrastructure permitting procedures.

¹https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en

- 6.6. Critically, Section 182A applications relate to strategic electricity infrastructure and are subject to a standalone statutory consent regime following pre application consultation under section 182E. Critically, the 2025 Regulations do not amend section 182A nor do they apply the RED III procedural framework, including the mandatory permit granting timelines, completeness check requirements, or associated administrative processes, to such applications.
- 6.7. In this regard, grid connection infrastructure does not constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development for the purposes of the RED III Regulations

European Green Deal²

- 6.8. The European Green Deal sets out a plan to transform Europe's economy, energy, transport and industries for a more sustainable future. It aims to cut emissions by at least 50% by 2030, rising towards 55%, while legally binding the 2050 neutrality goal through the European Climate Law.
- 6.9. The European Climate Law was enacted in July 2020 and writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. It also sets the intermediate target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The Climate Law also includes a process for setting a 2040 target and as of November 2025, Member States agreed on a general approach to a legally binding target of 90% reduction in GHG emissions.

REPower EU Plan³

- 6.10. In response to the hardships and global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission implemented its REPowerEU Plan to phase out Russian fossil fuel imports in May 2022. It is helping the EU to (1) save energy, (2) diversify energy supplies; and (3) produce clean energy.
- 6.11. More steps on the road to fully end dependency were presented in May and June 2025, that will see the gradual removal of Russian oil, gas and nuclear energy from the EU markets in a coordinated and secure manner as the EU's transition to clean energy advances. The EU plans to stop all imports of Russian natural gas and oil by the end of 2027 and restrict the import of nuclear materials deriving from Russia.
- 6.12. Considering this, the EU is accelerating efforts to bring about the energy transition and diversify energy supplies to eliminate risks to the security of supply and market stability.

² https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

³ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/energy/repowerEU_en#roadmap-to-fully-end-dependency-on-russian-energy

The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework⁴

- 6.13. The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework is a strategic initiative adopted by the European Union to guide its climate and energy policies from 2021 to 2030. It aims to ensure that the EU meets its long-term climate goals and transitions towards a sustainable energy system
- 6.14. Key targets of the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework include: (1) reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% compared to 1990 levels by 2030; (2) increasing the proportion of renewable energy to 27% of overall EU energy consumption; (3) reducing projected energy consumption by 27%; and (4) increasing the level in each Member State of electricity interconnections to other Member States to 15% of their installed production capacity.
- 6.15. To achieve these targets, the European Commission has proposed several policies, including:
- A reformed EU Emissions trading system
 - New indicators for assessing the competitiveness and security of the system
 - A governance system that requires member states to develop national plans for achieving the framework's objectives.

National Context

- 6.16. A brief summary of Ireland's legislative context is provided below

National Renewable Energy Action Plan Ireland (NREAP)⁵

- 6.17. Article 4 of the 2009/28/EC Directive on renewable energy required Ireland and other Member States to adopt a national renewable energy action plan. Submitted to the European Commission in 2010, Ireland's NREAP sets out national targets for the share of energy from renewable sources to be consumed in transport, electricity and heating and cooling in 2020. The plan demonstrates how Ireland will meet its overall national target established under the Directive.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015-2021⁶

- 6.18. The Act provides the legislative underpinning of the Irish Government's objective of a low-carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, and supports wider EU and UN objectives. The Act and the objectives it underpins provide a clear steer in favour of development that assists with the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient and

⁴ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2030-climate-targets_en

⁵ <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/crops/crops/2010NREAP.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/legislation/Pages/Climate-Action-and-Low-Carbon-Development-Act-2015.aspx>

environmentally sustainable economy. This Act was amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment).

Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015 – 2030 White Paper⁷

6.19. With recognition of the EU and global policy context, the core objectives of Irish energy policy up to 2030 are sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness in the transition to a low-carbon system. The White Paper makes clear that this transition requires the active engagement of both local and national state agencies, including local planning authorities, along with citizens, communities and businesses. It aims for 80-95% GHG reductions in the energy sector by 2050, with emphasis on diversifying to renewables including solar.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021⁸

6.20. The Act provides the legislative underpinning of the Irish Government's objective of a low-carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, and supports wider EU and UN objectives. The Act and the objectives provide a clear steer in favour of development that assists with the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

National Energy Security Framework 2022⁹

6.21. This framework provides a single overarching and initial response to address Ireland's energy security needs in the context of the war in Ukraine. It coordinates work connected to energy security across the electricity, gas and oil sectors and sets out a 'whole-of Government' response to the challenges posed to energy security and energy affordability. The development of this Framework has taken account of the need to decarbonise our society and economy as set out in recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Ireland's targets to reduce emissions by 51% over the decade to 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 as set out in the Climate Action Plan.

Energy Security in Ireland to 2030¹⁰

6.22. Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 outlines a new strategy to ensure energy security in Ireland for this decade, while ensuring a sustainable transition to a carbon neutral energy system by 2050. This report is being published as part of an Energy Security Package, containing a range of supplementary analyses, consultations, and reviews, which have informed the recommendations and actions related to energy security.

⁷ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/topics/Energy-Initiatives/energy-policy-framework/white-paper/Pages/White-Paper-on-Energy-Policy-in-Ireland.aspx>

⁸ [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Act 2021](#)

⁹ www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/221399/86cb99f5-58e3-4821-bc4c-e1bb1fa706fb.pdf#page=null

¹⁰<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/278473/4919d4e2-44ea-454a-855a-0229eeda4f4f.pdf#page=null>

- 6.23. The report sets out that Ireland’s future energy will be secure by moving from an oil- and gas-based energy system to an electricity-led system, maximising our renewable energy potential, flexibility and being integrated into Europe’s energy systems. Meeting our climate, renewable, and energy efficiency targets through actions and measures set out in the annually updated Climate Action Plan will deliver this secure energy future.
- 6.24. As we transition, the Energy Security Package states that we must ensure energy security is prioritised, monitored, and reviewed regularly, and includes a range of measures to implement this approach in the short and medium term by prioritising:
- Reduced and Responsive Demand
 - A Renewables-Led System
 - More Resilient Systems
 - Robust Risk Governance
- 6.25. Under each of these four areas of actions, the report sets out a range of mitigation measures, including the need for additional capacity of indigenous renewable energy, but also energy imports, energy storage, fuel diversification, demand side response, and renewable gases. The governance structures supporting the energy system, including oversight and accountability reforms, were also examined.

National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030¹¹

- 6.26. Ireland committed to meeting ambitious targets for reducing GHG emissions through a suite of policy documents including the Climate Action Plan (CAP), National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 and the National Adaptation Framework (2018 & 2024). National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) are the framework within which European Union Member States must set out their climate and energy objectives, targets, policies, and measures to the European Commission. Member States were required to develop NECPs on a ten-year rolling basis. The aim is to outline our energy and climate policies in detail for the period from 2021 to 2030 and look onwards to 2050.
- 6.27. The NECP covers five dimensions of the EU Energy Union:
- Decarbonisation
 - Energy efficiency
 - Energy security
 - Internal energy markets

¹¹ www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/299744/9a308db2-cbd5-46e8-8674-e939dca87263.pdf#page=null

- Research, innovation and competitiveness
- 6.28. The NECP brings together the policies, targets, tools and associated material from across Government bodies and departments in one document. It provides clarity on what current measures are in place and highlights areas where further efforts are needed.
- 6.29. It aims for a 55% reduction in non-ETS emissions by 2030 and highlights the role of solar in renewable electricity generation.

Project Ireland 2040¹²

- 6.30. Project Ireland 2040 is the government’s long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. The National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan 2021-2030 combine to form Project Ireland 2040. The aim of Project Ireland 2040 is to construct an improved Ireland for all of us. By 2040, there will be approximately one million additional people living here in Ireland. This population growth will require hundreds of thousands of new jobs, new homes, heightened cultural, and social amenities, enhanced regional connectivity and improved environmental sustainability, which Project Ireland 2040 aims to deliver.

National Planning Framework 2040¹³

- 6.31. The National Planning Framework (NPF), originally published in 2018, serves as a strategic guide for development and investment across Ireland. It aims to empower regions to take the lead in shaping the planning and development of their communities. The Framework outlines a set of national objectives and key principles, which form the basis for more detailed and locally refined plans.
- 6.32. The NPF was recently revised and formally approved by both houses of the Oireachtas on 8th April 2025. The Revised NPF identifies Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society as one of its core ‘Shared Goals’ and sets out the following ‘National Policy Objectives’ to support this transition:
- National Policy Objective 30:

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

¹² gov.ie - Project Ireland 2040

¹³ <http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

- National Policy Objective 32:

“Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.”

- National Policy Objective 70:

“Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a climate neutral economy by 2050”

- National Policy Objective 71:

“Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including supporting the delivery of renewable electricity generating development.”

6.33. The Revised NPF also includes the ‘National Strategic Outcome No 8’ which advocates a transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society via the following:

- Deliver 80% of our electricity needs from renewable sources by 2030 with a strategic aim to increase renewable deployment in line with EU targets and National policy objectives out to 2030 and beyond. It is expected that this increase in renewable deployment will lead to a greater diversity of renewable technologies in the mix.
- Reinforce the distribution and transmission network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of a more renewables focused source of energy across the major demand centres.

National Development Plan 2021-2030¹⁴

6.34. The National Development Plan sets out the Government’s over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. It is an ambitious plan that balances the significant demand for public investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland with a major focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure speed of delivery and value for money.

6.35. It allocates €165 billion in investment over the decade, part of which will be invested to bring about the low-carbon economy through enhanced energy infrastructure and climate action. It prioritises renewables to achieve energy security and reduce emissions by 51% by 2030 and support economic growth.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/publications/national-development-plan/>

6.36. It commits to increasing the share of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030, which will include investments in grid enhancements and integration of renewables to phase out the use of fossil fuels. Furthermore, as outlined in a Strategic Investment Priority, the National Development Plan supports delivering up to 2.5GW of grid-scale solar through the Regular Renewable Electricity Support Scheme by 2030. The National Development Plan also indicatively allocates €12.9 billion over the decade to assist the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications to fund its obligations under the Climate Action Plan.

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, (RESS)¹⁵

6.37. The RESS in Ireland is an Irish Government initiative aimed at increasing the supply of power from renewable energy sources to the country's electricity grid. The scheme operates through a series of competitive auctions held at frequent intervals throughout the lifetime of the scheme, with the latest being RESS 4, which was held from August 22nd to August 28th 2024, with auction results published on September 9th 2024 and final results on 25th September 2024.

6.38. This will allow Ireland to take advantage of falling technology costs and by not auctioning all the required capacity at once, it will not be 'locking in' higher costs for consumers for the entirety of the scheme. The Policy objectives of the RESS include:

- increasing Ireland's energy security, energy sustainability and ensuring the cost effectiveness of energy policy
- increasing technology diversity by broadening the renewable electricity technology mix
- delivering an ambitious renewable electricity policy to 2030
- meeting the electricity sector's carbon budget programme whilst also shielding consumers from high and volatile fossil fuel prices and ensure long term benefits to communities from renewable energy

6.39. Recent auctions have awarded significant solar capacity to help achieve 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and 8 GW of solar, as set out in Climate Action Plan 2023.

Climate Action Plan, (CAP), 2025¹⁶

6.40. The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) adopted on 15th April 2025 is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan and continues to implement the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. Building on the carbon budgets

¹⁵<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/renewable-electricity-support-scheme-ress/>

¹⁶<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

and sectoral emissions ceilings introduced in 2022, CAP25 provides an updated framework to drive emissions reductions across all sectors of the economy. Solar energy remains a central pillar in achieving Ireland's renewable energy targets, with the plan reaffirming its role in supporting decarbonisation of the electricity sector and enhancing energy security.

- 6.41. CAP25 advances the implementation of Ireland's legally binding carbon budgets, outlining the actions necessary to meet the target of reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050. The plan emphasises the need for system-wide transformation, with specific emphasis on accelerating the delivery of renewable energy infrastructure and grid upgrades.
- 6.42. The plan sets out a vision for the deployment of 9 GW of onshore wind, 8 GW of solar PV, and at least 7 GW of offshore wind by 2030, including 2 GW reserved for green hydrogen production. These targets underscore the government's continued commitment to large-scale renewable development as the foundation of Ireland's transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future.

Planning and Development Act 2024¹⁷

- 6.43. The Planning and Development Act was enacted on 17th October 2024 to consolidate and revise Ireland's planning legislation. This comprehensive piece of legislation emphasises proper planning and sustainable development in the common good, integrating national objectives for climate change mitigation, environmental protection, resource efficiency and renewable energy promotion. Through frameworks such as the national planning framework and National Planning Statements this act facilitates the assessment and approval of large-scale infrastructure projects, ensuring they contribute towards Ireland's low-carbon economy whilst balancing social, economic and environmental considerations.
- 6.44. The Act states that all development decisions and plans should align with the NPF, which sets renewable energy objectives (as outlined above), and they should align with the forthcoming National Planning Statements, of which one is likely to relate to the 'promotion and regulation of renewable energy development in appropriate locations', as per section 26 (h).
- 6.45. The Act requires that planning authorities prepare a strategy for sustainable development and regeneration (section 44) and for the environment and climate change (section 49). In addition, within their developments plans, planning authorities should include a statement demonstrating how the plan incorporates objectives to conserve and protect the environment of the plan area and supports the implementation of (1) the most recent Climate Action Plan; (2) the strategy relating to climate change adaptation and mitigation contained in the regional spatial and economic strategy for the region to which the plan relates; and (3) the local authority's climate action plan (section 43).
- 6.46. Other key reforms introduced with the Act include:

¹⁷ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2024/act/34/enacted/en/html>

- Ministerial guidelines to be replaced by national Planning Statements (Part 3);
 - Developments plans will have a 10-year lifespan with an interim review at year 5 (Part 3);
 - Clearer distinction between different categories of consents and statutory periods for decision making of all consent processes (Part 4);
 - Significantly revised corporate structure for An Bord Pleanála, which will be renamed An Coimisiún Pleanála, with a separation of corporate, decision making and governance functions (Part 17);
 - Updates to the processes and procedures of planning judicial review (Part 9)
- 6.47. The Act is being implemented on a phased basis, with an implementation plan outlining how various sections will be commenced over time. As of January 2025, a number of parts have been commenced or partially commenced including Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26¹⁸. The remaining provisions are expected to be implemented in 2026.

EirGrid All-Island Resource Adequacy Assessment 2025-2034¹⁹

- 6.48. EirGrid is leading the secure transition of the electricity grid to a sustainable low-carbon future, to meet the Government's Climate Action targets. It published the All-Island Resource Adequacy Assessment in March 2025 which looks at the balance between electricity demand and supply on the island of Ireland for the next 10 years.
- 6.49. Over the next ten years, demand is forecasted to grow considerably. In the median scenario, electricity demand is forecasted to increase 45% by 2034 from 2023 levels. The peak demand is forecast to increase 24% by 2034 from 2023 levels.
- 6.50. In forecasting future demand, two separate adequacy scenarios were undertaken, a Base scenario and a Secure scenario. From 2025 to 2027 both scenarios show the system outside of standard meaning additional capacity is required. From 2028 to 2032 the Secure scenario showed an additional 600-800MW is required to balance supply and demand under more challenging conditions. From 2033 to 2034 both scenarios show the system requires additional capacity in the range of 100-1000 MW. EirGrid considers the Secure scenario most prudent and should be adopted for decisions relating to securing capacity for the power system.
- 6.51. As such, the analysis in this report shows that further new electricity generation will be required to secure the transition to high levels of renewable electricity over the coming decades.

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/publications/planning-and-development-act-2024/#provisions-of-the-act-that-came-into-force-on-31-december-2025>

¹⁹ <https://cms.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/AIRAA-2025-2034.pdf>

Regional and Local Planning Policy Context

6.52. Whilst the National climate change and energy policy provide the landscape within which the planning system is set, it is against Regional and Local Planning Policy that the specifics of the Proposed Development are to be considered, and the most applicable documents are:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020-2032) for the Northern and Western Region.²⁰

6.53. Prior to the establishment of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly on 1st January 2015, the three previous Regional Authorities produced individual Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's), these have since been replaced by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) on the 28th June 2019, in accordance with section 24 (9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

"The objective of regional spatial and economic strategies shall be to support the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region for which the strategies are prepared which shall be consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the economic policies or objectives of the Government."
(sec23 Planning and Development Act 2000)."

6.54. The Strategy recognises in chapter 4 (page 163-165) of the report that;

"Renewable energy can be defined as energy developed from sources that are constantly replenished through the cycles of nature and, unlike fossil fuels, are not finite. It is important that our region sets out its ambitions concerning renewable energy in this context and shows its ability to help contribute to achieving national targets...The Northern and Western region is particularly well placed to lead the way in the efficient use of resources and developing a low carbon economy."

6.55. The relevant Regional Policy Objectives are as follows;

- **RPO 4.16:** The NWRA shall co-ordinate the identification of potential renewable energy sites of scale in collaboration with Local Authorities and other stakeholders within 3 years of the adoption of the RSES. The identification of such sites (which may extend to include energy storage solutions) will be based on numerous site selection criteria including environmental matters, and potential grid connections.

²⁰ <https://www.nwra.ie/rses/>

- **RPO 4.17:** To position the region to avail of the emerging global market in renewable energy by:
 - Stimulating the development and deployment of the most advantageous renewable energy systems
 - Supporting research and innovation
 - Encouraging skills development and transferability
 - Raising awareness and public understanding of renewable energy and encourage market opportunities for the renewable energy industry to promote the development and growth of renewable energy businesses.
 - Encourage the development of the transmission and distribution grids to facilitate the development of renewable energy projects and the effective utilisation of the energy generated from renewable sources having regard to the future potential of the region over the lifetime of the Strategy and beyond.
 - **RPO 4.18:** Support the development of secure, reliable and safe supplies of renewable energy, to maximise their value, maintain the inward investment, support indigenous industry and create jobs.
- 6.56. The Strategy recognises in chapter 8 (page 264) of the report that:
- “Developing the grid will enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows from surplus regional generation and also to facilitate future growth in electricity demand. These developments will strengthen the network for all electricity users, and in doing so will improve the security and quality of supply. This is particularly important if the region is to attract high technology industries that depend on a reliable, high-quality, electricity supply.”*
- 6.57. The Strategy recognises in chapter 8 (page 265) of the report that;
- “The need for reinforcement of the grid in the north west is being investigated and it is predicated on the level of renewable generation in both Donegal and its hinterland in western Northern Ireland. The solutions, technology and timing of this work are currently being reviewed and is an urgent priority for the region to ensure it has sufficient capacity and resilience.*
- Regionally we have a pivotal role in delivering a successful transition. There are rich renewable energy resources through wind, solar and wave (to mention a few) along and throughout the region... There is still significant potential for all new outputs to our grid.”*
- 6.58. The relevant Regional Policy Objectives are as follows;

- **RPO 8.1:** The Assembly support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network and the transition towards a low carbon economy centred on energy efficiency and the growth projects outlined and described in this strategy.
 - **RPO 8.2:** Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission network
 - **RPO 8.3:** The Assembly support the necessary integration of the transmission network requirements to allow linkages with renewable energy proposals at all levels to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.
 - **RPO 8.4:** That reinforcements and new electricity transmission infrastructure are put in place and their provision is supported, to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion ...
- 6.59. It is clear that the Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region, including solar power, and their connection to the national grid.

Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) 2022-2028

- 6.60. The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted on the 9th May 2022 and came into effect on the 20th June 2022. It has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and sets out a range of proposed policy objectives with supporting narrative for development up to 2028. In accordance with national policy, the plan is seeking to develop in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner, and it promotes the climate change agenda. It sets out the longer-term vision for the development of the County, while protecting and enhancing its environment through employing the principles of sustainable development in the policies and objectives set out therein.
- 6.61. Chapter 7 of the CDP outlines the importance of supporting the development of new and enhanced infrastructure and utilities which are critical to ensuring economic growth and investment and more sustainable communities. Section 7.7 'Electricity' states:
- "A strong electricity infrastructure and transmission grid is essential for the county in order to attract and retain high-tech industrial investment, to ensure competitive energy supplies, to achieve balanced development, to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, and to achieve climate change targets. Moreover, to attract renewable energy development, it is important for County Galway that the existing grid infrastructure is reinforced where necessary and expanded to areas not adequately serviced."*
- 6.62. Chapter 14 of the CDP outlines the importance of supporting the development of renewable energy resources and related infrastructure in the interests of delivering the renewable

energy targets outline in the Climate Action Plan 2019. One of the main strategic aims highlighted in this chapter is;

“To reduce County Galway’s dependency on fossil fuels and to provide alternative energy sources by harnessing the County’s potential for renewable energy sources while strengthening the grid transmission networks.”

6.63. Also stated in Chapter 14 under section 14.7.3 ‘Electricity and Gas Network’ is the policy objective to:

“to support the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency.”

6.64. To facilitate the sustainable growth of renewable energies a Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) have been prepared for the County as part of the plan. The LARES outlines the potential for a range of renewable resources, including bioenergy, micro renewables, wind, solar, geothermal, hydro, energy storage and marine renewables.

6.65. It also acknowledges the significant contribution they can deliver to make the county more energy secure, less reliant on fossil fuels, enabling future energy export and meeting assigned climate change targets.

6.66. Relevant policy objectives of the CDP 2022-2028 are as follows:

- RD 1 - Rural Enterprise Potential
 - To facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agriculture and food industry, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism. Development of Cafes, Art Galleries, Hot Desk Facilities etc. which are important to the rural economy.
- EG 1 – Enhancement of Electricity Infrastructure
 - Support and promote the sustainable improvement and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution network that supply the County, while taking into consideration landscape, residential, amenity and environmental considerations.
- EG 2 - Delivery of Electricity and Gas Infrastructure

- Support the provision and extension of electricity and gas transmission networks within the county which are critical to the economic development of the County subject to environmental quality, landscape, wildlife, habitats or residential amenity.
- CC 2 – Transition to a low carbon, climate-resilient society
 - It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to support the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency.
 - RE 1 – Renewable Energy Generation and ancillary facilities
 - To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation and ancillary facilities in the county to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, to facilitate a reduction in CO₂ emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.
- RE 5 – Renewable Energy Strategy
 - Support and facilitate the sustainable development and the use of appropriate renewable energy resources and associated infrastructure within the County having due regard to the Habitats Directive and to the detailed policy objectives and Development Standards set out in the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy as follows:
 - Renewable Energy Transmission
 - Renewable Energy Generation
 - ‘Strategic Areas’ for renewable energy development
 - Onshore Wind Energy
 - Solar Energy
 - Bioenergy/Anaerobic Digestion
 - Micro-renewables
 - Marine Renewables
 - Hydro Energy

- Geothermal Energy
- Alternative Technologies
- Energy Efficiency & Conservation
- Sustainable Transport
- Auto production
- Battery Storage
- Repowering/Renewing Wind Energy Developments
- Community Ownership
- RE 7 – Renewable Energy Generation – Transmission to a Low Carbon Economy
 - To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation in County Galway, considering the need to transition to a low carbon economy and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

Conclusion

- 6.67. Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 supports the development of local renewable energy resources and the energy transmission infrastructure to accommodate it, provided that the proposals are in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. Policy also recognises the key role that rural areas must play in energy infrastructure projects, but it also seeks to ensure residential amenity, heritage assets and ecology are respected.
- 6.68. Overall, established planning policy is heavily weighted toward support for renewable energy and associated transmission infrastructure projects in particular Solar Energy. The benefits of renewable energy are recognised at National, Regional and Local level reducing reliance on non-renewables, while cutting emissions.
- 6.69. At a local level, it is an objective of the Galway County Development Plan to support and facilitate new development that will facilitate the transmission of energy from local renewable sources such as hydro, bioenergy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.
- 6.70. In this regard, it is considered that the proposal is generally in accordance with the policies and objectives as outlined above contained with Galway CDP 2022 – 2028.

7. PLANNING MERIT AND SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE

- 7.1. This section of the statement will seek to evaluate the Planning Merit and potential impacts associated with the Proposed Development by looking at the key planning considerations as listed below:

EIA Development

- 7.2. Having regard to the detailed EIA Screening Report submitted with the application, the proposed development does not fall within any of the classes of development set out under Schedule 5, Parts 1 or 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and therefore does not constitute mandatory EIA development. Furthermore, the screening assessment undertaken in accordance with Schedule 7A concludes that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed infrastructure does not constitute EIA development and an EIAR is not required. Natura Impact Statement
- 7.3. This application includes an **AA Screening** and a **Natura Impact Statement ('NIS')** (see **Volume 1** for more detail).
- 7.4. The AA Screening a NIS is intended to provide the competent authority, in this case An Coimisiún Pleanála, as a public authority under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended ("the 2011 Regulations"), with the necessary information to assist in fulfilling their obligations under Regulation 42 of the 2011 Regulations and the underpinning European legislation (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, 'the Habitats Directive').
- 7.5. There are four Special Areas of Conservation ("SACs") and three Special Protections Areas ("SPAs") within a 15m Zol of the Proposed Development; River Shannon Callows SAC, Redwood Bog SAC, Ardgraique Bog SAC, Glenloughaun Esker SAC, River Suck Callows SPA, Middle Shannon Callows SPA, and River Little Brosna Callows SPA. None of these European Designated Sites were located within or directly adjacent to the Application Site.
- 7.6. All of the above European Designated Sites were screened for potential impacts using an Appropriate Assessment Screening. This screening examined the likelihood of negative impacts to occur on these European Designated Sites as a result of the Proposed Development, utilising the source-pathway-receptor model. The existence of connectivity indicates a possible pathway for impacts, which can lead to adverse effects on the integrity of European Designated Sites and their qualifying interests.

- 7.7. Of the above European Designated Sites, three were identified as having potential connectivity with the Application Site; River Shannon Callows SAC, River Suck Callows SPA and Middle Shannon Callows SPA and River Little Brosna Callows SPA. River Shannon Callows SAC was identified as having potential ecological connectivity, while the River Suck Callows SPA, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and River Little Brosna Callows SPA were identified as having potential ornithological connectivity, and required further assessment. No hydrological connectivity was identified between the Application Site and the above European Designated Sites. All other European Designated Sites were screened out for further assessment due to lack of connectivity.
- 7.8. Upon further assessment, both individually and cumulatively alongside other plans and projects, it was considered that in the absence of mitigation, potential adverse ex-situ effects could not be entirely ruled out. Due to this, mitigation measures were proposed which will prevent and mitigate any negative effects which may occur as a result of the Proposed Development. With the proper implementation of these mitigation measures, it is considered unlikely that any European Designated Site will be adversely affected by the Proposed Development during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases.
- 7.9. Subject to the implementation of these mitigation measures, the Proposed Development will **not adversely affect** the integrity of any European Designated Site, when considered alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Ecological Impact Assessment

- 7.10. An **Ecological Impact Assessment ('EclA')** was completed as part of this application and can be found within **Volume 3, Technical Appendix 2**.
- 7.11. The purpose of this document is to set out an assessment of the potential impacts to biodiversity receptors arising from the Proposed Development. Baseline information within the EclA includes the findings of an initial desk-based assessment, an extended Fossitt habitat survey and specific protected species surveys, as relevant, which have been outlined within the relevant sections of this report.
- 7.12. A desk-based assessment was conducted which identified four Special Areas of Conservation and three Special Protection Areas within 15km of the Application Site. Within 5km of the Application Site two Natural Heritage Areas were identified. Within 2km of the Application Site, three areas of ecological importance were identified, comprising of wetland and peatland habitats.
- 7.13. Upon further assessment, it was found that two of the above sites have the potential to be negatively impacted by the Proposed Development in the absence of mitigation; River Suck Callows SPA and Moaty Kilcloonineen Bog.
- 7.14. Mitigation measures are proposed to prevent and mitigate the occurrence of the above adverse impacts and effects. These mitigation measures include the appointment of an ECoW, the implementation of exclusion zones along sensitive ecological receptors and ecologically

important structures, pre-commencement surveys for various protected and notable species, pollution prevention practices and more. It is considered that with the proper implementation of these mitigation and best practice measures, negative impacts will not occur on the above SPA and wetland area, which will prevent adverse effects on their qualifying interests and conservation objectives. Wildlife shelters will also be implemented throughout the Application Site, which will have positive effect on the surrounding landscape, increasing the area's ability to support local wildlife.

- 7.15. The conclusion of the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and this document is that the Proposed Development will not lead to any significant adverse effects upon any European sites.
- 7.16. A total of 10 habitat types were noted during the Fossitt habitat and extended species scoping survey of the ESA comprising the site and a 50 m buffer undertaken in October 2025. During the site visits the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected and notable species present within the local area. The main impacts during the construction phase include the direct loss of habitat under the Proposed Development footprint and indirect degradation of habitat due to disturbance and pollution. Given the low ecological value of habitats within the Application Site, in addition to the nature of the Proposed Development which will largely retain features of relatively higher ecological interest, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant residual effects upon habitats within the Application Site.
- 7.17. The Proposed Development is considered unlikely to have any significant effects on local populations of protected species. However, several measures have been outlined within this report to further reduce any potential impacts for local ecology as a precautionary measure to ensure that no negative effects occur.
- 7.18. A cumulative assessment was carried out which assessed the potential cumulative impact which may occur through a combined negative effect stemming from a collective of local lands and projects. This assessment included all development within a 5km Zol of the Application. Any application which was refused or invalid were not assessed, as well as any applications that were older than 15 years. Planning applications which were very small scale, such as residential renovations, were also not included. It was overall concluded that that Proposed Development, alone or in combination with the assessed development, will not contribute to a significant cumulative negative effect.
- 7.19. Overall, it was concluded that the Proposed Development would not give rise to any adverse effects on any Designated Sites, protected/notable species, or ecologically important areas with the implementation of mitigation measures. In the unlikely event that an impact does occur, the potential effects are predicted to **negligible to minor adverse**.
- 7.20. In addition, a Biodiversity Management Plan ("BMP") has been produced which sets out enhancement and compensatory measures to ensure the proposed substation and grid connection which seek to maintain and enhance the biodiversity value of the Application Site and increase the site's capacity to support a wider range of species. These measures are also

intended to ensure that any potential adverse effects arising from the development are avoided and that the site delivers a positive ecological outcome over the long term.

- 7.21. Enhancement measures proposed under the LEMP and BMP include the planting of species-rich native hedgerows. Additional biodiversity features will comprise bird boxes, bat boxes, hibernacula and invertebrate hotels.
- 7.22. The establishment of new hedgerows will provide year-round food and shelter for a wide range of local species, including a range of birds, mammals and invertebrates.
- 7.23. Additionally, there will be the installation of hibernacula, bird boxes, bat boxes and invertebrate hotels, which will provide shelter to and be of benefit to a wide range of species.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 7.24. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') was undertaken and submitted as part of this application, which can be found within Volume 3, Technical Appendix 1. The purpose of the LVIA is to assess the effects of a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) comprising a 110kV air-insulated substation (AIS) and associated grid connection infrastructure (the "Proposed Development") within the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm (Planning Reference 2361049, as amended under Planning Reference 2561903) on lands at Ballydonagh, Kiltormer, Co. Galway, Ireland (the "Application Site"). The LVIA considers the potential direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Development upon the landscape resources, views and visual amenity receptors within the existing landscape and visual baseline across a 5km study zone.
- 7.25. The highest visual effects will be experienced within an approximate 300m radius of the Application Site boundary, particularly along local roads to the northwest of the Proposed Development. There will also be views of the substation and associated infrastructure, including lighting masts and sections of the grid connection infrastructure (replacement lattice towers), from the Skenageehy Road to the east.
- 7.26. Beyond this, areas experiencing visibility are extremely limited due to the presence of existing vegetation, including mature hedgerows and field boundaries, which provide a high degree of screening. As such, views from many locations are likely to be glimpsed and transient in nature.

Construction Effects

- 7.27. Landscape and visual effects and their significance at construction stage will be temporary adverse and will result in:
- Likely effects to landscape character or visual amenity within the locality or the wider study area as a result of the visibility of construction activities such as, cranes, the

movement of construction vehicles along local roads, and other tall equipment such as machinery on site;

- Effects of temporary site infrastructure such as site traffic and a temporary site construction compound; and
- Likely direct effects arising from construction of the Proposed Development will be confined to the Application Site.

7.28. The highest landscape and visual effects during the construction stage will be experienced in the vicinity of the Application Site from locations with open or partial views of the site, particularly along the Unnamed road, Northwest of the Proposed Development. There will also be views of the construction of the taller elements such as the lighting masts and lattice towers from the Skenageehy Road. The principal views of construction works will likely be experienced within a radius of up to approximately 300m from the boundary of the Proposed Development.

7.29. More distant views at the construction works, beyond 300m will be unlikely, given the amount of screening provided by the vegetation within the immediate context of the site. Views may be possible through gaps of vegetation or from elevated locations within the study area. Considering the distance of these views, 500m and beyond, visibility is considered not significant due to the effects of distance, the scale of the project and a high dependency on clear weather conditions. While discernible, the construction effects in long distance views are not considered significant as they form part of a wide panoramic view in which they form one visible component of many.

7.30. The landscape and visual effects at construction stage will be temporary, adverse and range from **Low** to **Very Low** in the wider study area and **Medium to Low** for areas in close proximity to the boundary of the Application Site, where intervening existing vegetation and built structures do not screen views of the Proposed Development. Therefore, the resulting significance during construction effects will range from **Moderate/ Slight to Not Significant** and **temporary** in duration.

Operational Phase

7.31. **Figure 1.4: Appendix 1A** illustrates viewpoints from locations selected as 'Representative Viewpoints' for the assessment of landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development.

7.32. Operational effects will result in:

- Likely effects of the development on views and visual amenity such as the potential for the development to alter (beneficial or adverse) the composition of the view from a viewpoint; and

- Likely cumulative effects of the development in conjunction with other committed developments of similar type and scale upon the landscape and visual resource of the study area.

Landscape Effects

- 7.33. The following likely direct and indirect landscape effects have been identified (along with their duration and nature) arising from the Proposed Development. Direct or indirect landscape effects on the fabric of the landscape and its receptors are closely related to the nature and extent of visibility.
- 7.34. The application site is entirely located within the Central Galway Complex Landscape Type and the Kilcrow Basin Landscape Character Unit LCU 6d in Co. Galway. The Landscape Character Types have been indicated in **Figure 1.1; Appendix 1A**.
- 7.35. The main landscape effects of the Proposed Development will be associated with the introduction of the substation, which introduces new built and vertical elements into fields previously used for agricultural practices. Ancillary infrastructure, such as site fencing, will be limited in scale and will contribute little additional influence on landscape character.
- 7.36. The Proposed Development also includes associated grid connection infrastructure, comprising the removal of existing wooden poles and their replacement with lattice towers. These elements will be perceived in the context of existing overhead line infrastructure within and adjacent to the Application Site.
- 7.37. The proposed mitigation planting will, over time, assist in softening and screening views of the development. However, within the confines of the Application Site, the magnitude of landscape change is considered to be **High to Medium**, resulting in effects of **Moderate** significance overall.
- 7.38. Indirect change will occur outside of the Application Site boundary, where the visibility of the Proposed Development has an influence on the perception of the character of the landscape. The indirect change in landscape character is greatest in its immediate and close surroundings where open and partial views are possible within approximately 300m radius from the Application Site boundary. The magnitude of change in these areas is considered **Medium to Low**. The significance of landscape effects on the landscape character is therefore considered to be **Slight reducing to Not Significant** as mitigation planting matures.
- 7.39. Indirect change and the significance of landscape effects will reduce with increasing distance from the Application Site in the remaining study area (between approximately 300m and 2km from the Site boundary). Given the nature, scale and setting of the Proposed Development, the change in character will not be recognised over long distances throughout the wider study area in accessible views. Therefore, the significance of landscape effects on the landscape character is therefore considered to be **Not Significant**.

Visual Effects

- 7.40. The majority of residential dwellings in the immediate environment of the Proposed Development are located mainly to the southwest, in Kiltormer Village.
- 7.41. The main visual receptor groups are local residents, road users and pedestrians. Residents and pedestrians will have a higher sensitivity to change than the road users. Vehicle travellers will focus primarily on traffic and not on available views, however, if looked upon, the Proposed Development will be seen in transit making the views fleeting in nature.
- 7.42. The highest visual effects will be experienced within an approximate 300m radius of the Application Site boundary, particularly along the unnamed road to the northwest of the Proposed Development. There will also be views of the lighting masts and sections of the associated grid connection infrastructure, including replacement lattice towers, from the Skenageehy Road to the east.
- 7.43. Beyond this, areas experiencing visibility are extremely limited due to the level of existing vegetation, including mature hedgerows and field boundaries, which provide a high degree of screening. As such, views from many locations will be glimpsed and fleeting in nature.
- 7.44. The magnitude of visual effects on local residents and residential areas with views of the Proposed Development within approximately 300m are considered to range from **Low / Negligible** to **None** depending on the openness of views and intervening screening by vegetation, topography or built structures. In areas where the Proposed Development will be visible, the significance ranges from **Slight** reducing to **Not Significant** as the mitigation planting matures. In other areas, where the Proposed Development is screened by vegetation, there will be a '**No Change**' scenario.
- 7.45. The Proposed Development will add an industrial character to accessible views. Distance will become a mitigating factor, and the Proposed Development will be seen in the context of the wider landscape.
- 7.46. In long-distance views ranging between approximately 1km and 2km, the effects will be Negligible. While the Proposed Development will add an industrial element to the view when seen, the change will be seen in the context of the wider landscape, where mitigation measures will help integrate the Proposed Development into its setting. The magnitude of visual change is considered **Negligible** and the significance **Not Significant**.

Archaeology and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

- 7.47. This application includes an Archaeology and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment ('AAHIA'), see Volume 3, Technical Appendix 3 for more details.
- 7.48. The desk-based assessment was conducted to ascertain all historical and archaeological information relevant to the Application Site and the local area. All types of heritage assets were identified within relevant 5km and 2km study zones around the Proposed Development,

while additional baseline information was also obtained through a site walkover survey, map regression analysis, placenames analysis, aerial photography and consultation with relevant records and databases.

- 7.49. There are no recorded sites within the RMP, RPS and NIAH that are within or near to the Application Site that could be physically impacted by the Proposed Development. In addition, no confirmed features of archaeological significance were identified during the desk-based assessment of the Application Site. As such, no direct impacts upon known archaeological and heritage assets are anticipated and no mitigation measures are considered to be necessary in relation to this. It should be noted that archaeological monitoring is secured under Condition 5 (v) of Planning Reference 2361049, as amended under 2561903 (see condition 14(v) also), which requires archaeological supervision of all site clearance and ground disturbance works. This established requirement can be carried forward as part of any subsequent permission.
- 7.50. The surrounding archaeology within the SMR/RMP includes enclosures, ringforts, and some quarry's, indicating that the site lies within a landscape with known archaeological activity. As such, the Application Sites archaeological potential is most likely **Moderate** for Prehistoric and Early Medieval remains throughout its extent. The Geophysical Survey found a number of anomalies within Fields 13, 16, 18 & 22; and a programme of test trenching was undertaken between the 4th and 14th of June 2024 to target any Geophysical anomalies that were detected. All trenches were excavated and metal detected in full, with no archaeological objects recovered. As such, the results of this programme showed that all trenches within the RLB were found to be sterile.
- 7.51. Nonetheless, as well as pre-construction evaluation, it is proposed that an archaeological programme of monitoring be implemented, and that **any groundworks undertaken be monitored by a qualified archaeologist during the construction stage**. The results of such work will also inform the need for any further archaeological work as required. Any requests and requirements for archaeological work is at the discretion of the NMS and Galway County Council.
- 7.52. Indirect effects upon the surrounding heritage assets have been assessed as overall **Minor**. Therefore, no specific mitigation is considered to be required for the reduction of any visual impacts.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment

- 7.53. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment ('FRA-DIA') has been submitted as part of this application and can be found in Volume 3, Technical Appendix 4.
- 7.54. The FRA and DIA requirements are set out by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' document.
- 7.55. The Guidance aims to avoid inappropriate development in flood zones and instead direct it to areas of low risk by adopting a sequential approach.

- 7.56. The PFRA, NIFM and CFRAM flood maps present no areas within the Application Site identified as being at risk of flooding from fluvial or coastal events and therefore the Application Site is situated in 'Flood Zone C'.
- 7.57. The proposed type of development is specified as Highly Vulnerable Development category outlined in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines. The access track can be classed as 'Water Compatible Development', the substation has been classed as 'Highly Vulnerable Development' and the grid connection infrastructure can be classed as 'Essential Infrastructure'.
- 7.58. In addition to fluvial and coastal flood risk, the PFRA map also indicates areas of flood risk due to pluvial sources. The topographical survey and the PFRA map indicated a number of locations where surface water flooding was predicted. Where the PFRA map has indicated areas within the Application Site at risk of pluvial flooding, there will only be 'Water Compatible Development' located within those areas, such as access tracks.
- 7.59. It is proposed to construct a network of rainwater harvesting tanks and two soakaway pit/infiltration drains within the Application Site. The idea is to capture any overland flow in the SuDS device before infiltrating into the surrounding soils.
- 7.60. The proposed soakaway pits/infiltration drains will have an overall length of approximately 93m, with a base width of 2.0m, a 2.0m design depth and a 0.15m freeboard. It will be filled with crushed rock with a void ratio of 20% and will provide a total storage volume of approximately 74.4m³.
- 7.61. The underground piped system will separately connect the Eirgrid Control building and Customer Control Building to separate rainwater harvesting tanks, which discharges into a soakaway pit. As the transformer will hold a volume of oil, the system will include a class 1 full retention separator. The soakaway pit and rainwater harvesting tanks will be designed to hold a total volume of 177m³ with the detailed design of the structure being submitted to the council for review prior to the construction period.
- 7.62. A permanent toilet is proposed within the Eirgrid Control building and Customer Control Building and will be utilised by maintenance staff of substation. Each toilet will be off grid toilet with a foul holding tank which will be emptied when required by an approved contractor.
- 7.63. Additional drainage measures to be implemented on-site include the following:
- Access Tracks and laydown areas: access tracks are to be unpaved and constructed from local stone. Temporary swales or similar shall be utilised to collect runoff from access tracks with discharge to ground through percolation areas. Where swales are utilised, frequent checks of dams formed from gravels and other excavated material should be undertaken.

- 7.64. The FRA and DIA have therefore demonstrated that the Proposed Development will **not increase flood risk** away from the Application Site during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be acceptable in planning policy terms.

Construction Traffic Management Plan

- 7.65. A **Construction Traffic Management Plan ('CTMP')** has been produced and submitted with this application, which can be found in **Volume 3, Technical Appendix 5**.
- 7.66. The CTMP outlines the overall framework for managing the movement of construction and delivery traffic to and from the Proposed Development, as well as considering the type of traffic it will generate. The traffic assessment for the operational phase is also considered.
- 7.67. The CTMP considered parts of the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Guidance which are suitable for this project, namely to include details of the existing conditions and issues relating to the Proposed Development.
- 7.68. Impacts from the operational phase of the site, consisting of between 10-15 LGVs per year, will be below the threshold for a Traffic Impact Assessment, as stated in the TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.
- 7.69. Increased volumes of traffic will be generated by the Proposed Development during the construction period. However, the overall volumes of traffic generated each day by the Proposed Development during the construction period are considered to be quite low. During the anticipated 14 month construction period, a total of 588 HGV deliveries will be made to the Application Site. During the peak construction period, it is anticipated that there will be an approximate maximum of 15 daily HGV deliveries.
- 7.70. The County Development Plan outlines standard visibility splay dimensions for Local Secondary Roads at 90m x 2.4m, however visibility splays of 160m x 2.4m were agreed as part of the (**Planning Ref: 2361049**). Therefore, for completeness, these have been retained for this application. The visibility splay requires remedial works that is under previous consent for the adjacent solar farm, this includes the trimming of 227m of hedgerow.
- 7.71. Swept path analysis shows that the existing access requires 23m of hedgerow removal, as well as three trees and fence posts, in order to be suitable for the largest construction vehicles to access the Proposed Development.
- 7.72. A dedicated person will be appointed for the management of the delivery booking system during the construction stage.
- 7.73. The Applicant will conduct a pre- and post-construction condition survey on the L4031, 200m either side of the access point, with the Applicant liable to repair any damage to the public roads attributed to the construction of the Proposed Development. This should be conditioned as part of any planning consent.

- 7.74. The CTMP sets out a variety of specific mitigation measures that will be implemented during construction that will minimise the impact of the construction traffic on the environment and local communities; these include:
- Limitations on working times and HGV scheduling;
 - Site security and signage; and,
 - Measures to control emissions of dust and other airborne contaminants.
- 7.75. This Construction Traffic Management Plan conforms to the policies and objectives of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges published by the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan

- 7.76. The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) has been prepared to establish the framework for environmental management during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, comprising the 110kV substation together with its associated grid connection and ancillary infrastructure.
- 7.77. The OCEMP identifies the principal construction activities associated with the development, including site establishment, construction of access tracks and water crossings, excavation and earthing works, installation of underground cabling, erection of steel masts, construction of foundations and above ground electrical infrastructure, and the implementation of drainage measures. These works are anticipated to be undertaken over a construction period of up to 14 months and will involve a combination of HGV movements, including abnormal loads, and staff vehicles.
- 7.78. The OCEMP sets out the key environmental sensitivities within and adjacent to the site, including surface water features, groundwater, soils and ecological receptors, and identifies the potential risks arising from construction activities particularly including water quality and potential pollution pathways. It provides for the implementation of standard construction phase mitigation measures, including adherence to recognised pollution prevention guidance and the careful management of excavation and construction works.
- 7.79. An outline Construction Methodology is included within the application package which outlines the sequence and nature of construction operations and confirms that all works will be undertaken in accordance with best practice and relevant environmental guidance. The OCEMP also provides for the appointment of a Site Manager and environmental personnel who will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the plan, with all contractors required to adhere to its provisions throughout the construction phase.
- 7.80. In respect of resource and waste management the OCEMP incorporates a strategy based on the waste hierarchy, including measures for the segregation, reuse and appropriate disposal of materials arising during construction. It also sets out procedures for the storage and

handling of fuels, oils and chemicals, refuelling areas and spill response measures to prevent contamination of soils and watercourses.

- 7.81. In summary the OCEMP provides a structured framework of environmental management measures to ensure that the construction of the substation, grid connection and all associated infrastructure is carried out in a controlled manner which minimises adverse environmental effects and also sets out detailed measures to be developed by the appointed contractor prior to commencement of works.

Acoustic Impact Assessment

- 7.82. An Acoustic Impact Assessment has been prepared by Renewable Energy Systems Ltd and is submitted as part of the accompanying documentation. The assessment considers the potential effects arising from both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development, including cumulative effects with the permitted Ballydonagh Solar Farm and its extension.
- 7.83. In the absence of specific national planning guidance relating to noise from this type of infrastructure, the assessment adopts a robust and well-established methodology informed by recognised standards and guidance, including that of the Environmental Protection Agency, the World Health Organisation and BS 4142. This approach is consistent with accepted planning practice and provides an appropriate framework for assessing potential impacts on nearby sensitive receptors.
- 7.84. The assessment identifies the principal operational noise source as the proposed transformer within the substation compound. A detailed noise modelling exercise has been undertaken using conservative assumptions, representing a worst-case operational scenario. The results demonstrate that noise levels generated by the Proposed Development at the nearest residential receptors are low and will not give rise to adverse impacts.
- 7.85. Predicted operational noise levels are significantly below recognised threshold criteria, both in isolation and when assessed cumulatively with the adjoining solar developments. Daytime and evening noise levels remain well within a 50 dB and 45 dB threshold respectively, with night time levels also comfortably below the 40 dB criterion typically applied to protect residential amenity. These findings confirm that the Proposed Development will not result in any significant adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties.
- 7.86. During the construction phase, temporary noise effects may arise however, these will be short term and localised in nature. Construction activities will be undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance and controlled through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which will include appropriate mitigation measures to minimise noise emissions.
- 7.87. Having regard to the nature, scale and location of the Proposed Development, the separation distances to existing dwellings, and the findings of the Acoustic Impact Assessment, it is considered that the proposal will not give rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

The development therefore accords with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development in this regard.

8. BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Need for Renewable Energy Developments

- 8.1. The most notable benefit of the Proposed Development however is the support it will provide towards the Irish Government's commitments to reduce emissions of GHGs to combat the effects of climate change. In May 2019, the Irish Government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency which led to the enactment of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, committing Ireland to a legally binding goal of climate neutrality no later than 2050.
- 8.2. Although significant progress towards this goal has already been made, Ireland has far to go, with current projections indicating only a 23% reduction in emissions by 2030 against the required 51% from 2018 levels²¹. The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) published Ireland's first programme of carbon budgets on 25th October 2021 (adopted in April 2022), which set out the emissions limits needed to achieve climate neutrality over three period – 2021-2025; 2026-2030; and 2031-2035 (provisional). The Council's recommended pathway requires a 51% reduction in GHGs by 2030 relative to 2018 levels. The second programme of carbon budgets (for 2031-2040), a draft of which was submitted to the department by the CCAC in December 2024, notes that out of the 1,196 scenarios modelled, none achieve climate neutrality by 2050²².
- 8.3. The Proposed Development will accommodate the transmission of a substantial amount of green electricity from renewable sources, therefore offsetting the need for power generation from the combustion of fossil fuels. There is a clear need to ensure security of supply through the development of a diverse energy generation system with an adequate transmission grid network in order to comply with national policy and climate change targets discussed above, as well as the 80% renewable electricity target by 2030 (with up to 8 GW from solar PV). This aligns with policy in Galway's County Development Plan 2022-2028 and its associated LARES, which support the deployment of large-scale renewable energy projects like solar farms and the associated grid infrastructure to facilitate their connection to the national grid. Therefore, the Proposed Development plays a key role in the green energy transition and combatting climate change.

²¹ <https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2025/epa-projections-show-ireland-off-track-for-2030-climate-targets.php>

²² <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/carbonbudgets/>

Landowner Benefits

- 8.4. The Proposed Development is required to export the energy from the two solar farms which provide a stable and diversified source of revenue over a sustained period while seeking to improve the ecological value of the Application Site as outlined in the BMP.

Legacy Benefits

- 8.5. The Proposed Development will leave a positive legacy in the form of improved biodiversity and landscape value thanks to additional planting of hedgerows at the construction phase and the ongoing sensitive site management for the duration of the development's lifespan. The enhancement of the land within the Application Site boundary will increase the sites capability of supporting wildlife. This will be achieved by:

- Provision of species rich hedgerows;
- Creation of Hibernacula;
- Installation of Bird boxes;
- Installation of Bat boxes; and
- Installation of Invertebrate hotels.

- 8.6. Additionally, as the substation and grid route will become part of the National grid infrastructure, this will provide an opportunity for future renewable energy projects to connect to the Grid Network. Substations provide a more diversified supply of electricity, help harness the potential of clean energy potentially leading to lower energy costs for consumers and contribute to Ireland's climate goals by providing access to renewable power.

Other Socio-Economic Benefits

- 8.7. The proposed development will generate a range of economic benefits both in terms of its construction and operation, generating jobs for installation and maintenance. A range of support services will be required including haulage, on-site welfare facilities, refuse and recycling facilities, transport and potentially local accommodation for construction workers.

Summary of Benefits

- 8.8. In summary, the Proposed Development offers a range of benefits that align with national and local priorities for sustainable energy and biodiversity enhancement. It directly supports Ireland's urgent climate goals by contributing to GHG emission reductions and the transition to 80% renewable electricity by 2030, up to 8 GW of solar PV capacity, while addressing the gap in current projections that show only 23% emissions cut by 2030 against the required 51%.

- 8.9. The long-term legacy benefits include improved landscape and biodiversity through enhancements including habitat creation and management measures.
- 8.10. Socio-economic benefits include capital investment, creating jobs in construction, operation, and maintenance alongside demand for local services such as haulage and fencing.
- 8.11. Overall, the Proposed Development represents a vital step towards energy security and decarbonisation.

9. SUMMARY

- 9.1. In conclusion, it is considered that the Proposed Development represents a substantial contribution to Ireland's energy security and transition to a low-carbon economy. The development is fully aligned with the the Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Planning Framework, and national climate legislation under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.
- 9.2. A wide-ranging suite of environmental and technical assessments has been undertaken to support the application. These include Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Noise Impact Assessment, Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment, Archaeology and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment and a Construction Traffic Management Plan. Each concluded that the Proposed Development can be accommodated at this location without giving rise to significant or unmitigated impacts.
- 9.3. From an ecological perspective, the site layout and management plan have been designed to avoid direct impacts on designated sites and to preserve habitats of local ecological value. Mitigation measures have been incorporated to protect birds during construction, including pre-commencement surveys.. The project also delivers ecological enhancement through a range of habitat creation measures, which will strengthen site biodiversity and wildlife. No significant residual effects on designated habitats or protected species are anticipated.
- 9.4. In terms of landscape and visual impact, effects are primarily localised, confined to the immediate setting of the Application Site and mitigated through existing vegetation, topography, and proposed infill planting. The visual character of the landscape will be preserved in the wider context, and the development will integrate into a working rural environment.
- 9.5. Access to the site has been carefully planned through one existing access point off the L4301, with swept path analysis and visibility splays designed to the required standard. Construction traffic will be short-term and managed through a booking system, and pre- and post-construction road condition surveys. The Construction Traffic Management Plan ensures compliance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and will safeguard road safety and local amenity.
- 9.6. Drainage will be managed through a sustainable system of rainwater harvesting tanks, and two infiltration trenches / soakaways, ensuring that the Proposed Development will not increase flood risk away from the Application Site.
- 9.7. The development is consistent with the overarching strategic aims of the *Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028*, which supports the transition to a decarbonised energy system, promotes sustainable development in rural areas and encourages local biodiversity

enhancement. Specifically, the proposal supports policies EG 1, EG 2, CC 2 and RE 1 which favour renewable energy development that contributes to Ireland's targets while respecting planning, environmental and community considerations.

- 9.8. In conclusion, the Proposed Development represents a well-considered, policy-compliant renewable energy project that responds positively to the climate and biodiversity emergencies. It achieves a balanced and integrated approach to environmental protection, rural land use, and infrastructure delivery. The proposal offers national and local benefits that far outweigh any limited and mitigated environmental effects. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the application merits a grant of planning permission.



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