

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name:	Cloncreen Wind Farm
Project Number:	2019-0189
Country:	Ireland
Project Description:	Construction and operation of an onshore windfarm with a capacity of up to 90 MW in the Irish Midlands
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise <sup>1</sup> :	yes

(details for projects included are provided in section: "EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise")

### Environmental and Social Assessment

#### Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the installation and operation of wind farm consisting of 21 wind turbines including the related civil and electrical infrastructure, located in Offay County about 60 km west of Dublin. The turbines will have a unit capacity of 3.6 MW, a rotor diameter of 136 m and total height of 170 m. These dimensions are just within the limitations set by the planning permission. The project further includes a project internal transformer station and the connection to an existing substation via a 1.7 km underground cable. Wind energy plays the major role in Ireland in reaching the target of 70 % of renewable electricity by 2030.

Wind farms fall under Annex II of Directive 2014/52/EU amending the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU. It is therefore up to the Member State's competent authority to judge whether an individual wind farm requires an EIA or not, based on criteria defined in Annex III of the EIA Directive. Given its overall size the project was screened-in and a full environmental impact assessment was carried out by the Competent Authority (which is An Bord Pleanála (ABP) for projects, which are considered as Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID))

The project is located at Cloncreen Bog, an area of about 960 ha consisting of remaining peat, bare cutaway and re-vegetated peatlands. Peat harvesting has ceased since 2017, but there are some remaining infrastructures, and a number of rail lines are passing through the bog, which had served the transportation of milled peat. The vegetation is a mix of heather, soft rush, scrub (mainly birch) and a few fast growing coniferous. The project including roads and building infrastructure would affect about 4 % of the land surface.

<sup>1</sup> Only projects that meet the scope of the Carbon Footprint Exercise, as defined in the EIB Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tonnes CO2e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Luxembourg, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020

A detailed peat stability assessment was performed, which concluded, that the planned construction activities would not result in an increased risk of bog slides. A peat management plan has been developed to limit the impact of the construction activities. The site hosts a man-made drainage system that was necessary for peat-cutting. Following a hydrological study, the wind farm has been designed to limit modifications on the existing bog drainage system in order to avoid negative impact on the water quality in downstream catchments or ecosystems.

The Environmental Impact Study included an ornithological investigation with various on-site monitoring sessions during critical periods, such as breeding, wintering, and migration. In total, the collision risk was determined and considered as low. Further detailed investigations were related to noise, visual impact, and shadow flicker impact at nearest residential buildings.

In addition, an appropriate assessment (AA) regarding the conservation objective of one of the nearest Natura 2000 sites (River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation, SCA 002162 , in about 15 km distance) was carried out. Potential significant effects arising from emissions to surface and ground waters and potential hydrological changes resulting from wind farm construction were investigated. These risks will be mitigated through diligent design and detailed measures specified in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

An Bord Pleanála concluded that the project (wind farm including the grid connection) as such, and in combination with other developments in the vicinity, is unlikely to have significant negative environmental impact under the conditions specified in the planning permission and with adequate mitigation measures in place. ABP further concluded that the project by itself or in combination with the other developments would not be likely to adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

Conditions and mitigation measures are rather typical for wind farms and refer to further bird monitoring, noise and shadow flicker monitoring and protection, general construction regulations, waste management or the obligation to dismantle the installation at the end of the operational period.

## **EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise**

The direct CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions of the wind farms are considered negligible.

Subject to confirmation of the final design of the project, it is calculated that based on the avoidance of electricity generation from a combination of existing and new power plants in Ireland (combined margin for intermittent generation), the total relative effect of the project is a net annual reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions by 84 CO<sub>2</sub>e/yr.

For the annual accounting purposes of the EIB Carbon Footprint, the project emissions will be prorated according to the EIB lending amount signed in that year, as a proportion of project cost'.

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### **Social Assessment, where applicable**

The wind farm site is owned by a promoter group company. As a former peat harvesting site, the land is not well suited for agricultural activities, no physical or economic displacement took place.

### **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

A series of public information and consultation sessions have been held in the local community centres. In addition the project promoter has been actively contacting all households within a 2 km radius of a turbine to inform them at all stages of the project development. The Promoter has set up an independently chaired Community Engagement Forum as an additional communications channel that enables the Promoter to engage with interested groups and communities in the vicinity of the wind farm.

A dedicated procedure is in place to treat complaints/queries or comments from the public. A Community Liaison Officer (CLO) has been appointed to the project to actively manage the communication and potential complaints.

As required under the Irish Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, the project has to establish a Community Benefit Fund and to contribute 2 €/MWh produced during the RESS period. This fund will support community initiatives (preferably those related to the UN SDG, including education, energy efficiency or climate action) and compensate particular affected household living closer than 1 km to a turbine.

### **Other Environmental and Social Aspects**

n/a

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the information available and subject to the conditions as defined in the planning permit, the project is acceptable for Bank financing.