

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	BORD GAIS ONSHORE WIND PROGRAMME	
Project Number:	2009-0748	
Country:	Ireland	
Project	The project is an investment programme of eight wind farms with an expected total capacity of 219 MW to be installed in Ireland between 2011 and 2013.	
EIA required:	YES	
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ : (Details are provided in section: "Carbon Footprint")	YES	

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

Wind farms fall under Annex II of Directive 85/337/EC, as amended by Directives 97/11/EC and 2003/35/EC. Thus, the projects would be subject to an EIA based on a case-by-case decision or defined criteria set by the competent authorities. All the wind farms in the programme have undergone EIA processes and have obtained relevant approvals (planning consents granted with conditions).

The environmental appraisal has shown that the most important impacts of these projects are on the ecology due to the presence of protected areas (for 6 wind farms) and to the risk of bog slides (for one wind farm). Three out of the eight wind farms (Garracummer, Glentane and Knockacummer) are within Special Protection Areas (SPAs). One other wind farm (Booltiagh II) is located adjacent to a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and two others (Ballymartin I & II) less than 5 km from Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). All of these areas for nature conservation were designated subsequent to the granting of the permission. Written confirmation by the competent authorities have been obtained that with the adoption of the proposed mitigation measures the six wind farms will not have a significant negative impact on the protected sites. For the Garracummer project, the promoter has undertaken detailed geotechnical investigations on the site and has chosen a site layout to minimise the risk associated with bog slides. It has also prepared a bog slide management plan outlining the relevant risks and the planned mitigation measures. On this basis the risk of bog slides appears adequately mitigated.

Overall, in conclusion, the residual environmental impact of the project will be limited and is considered acceptable for Bank financing.

Environmental and Social Assessment

In Ireland the EIA procedure is integrated within a combined "strategic planning" permitting procedure. The closure of process is documented by the grant of planning which mentions the conditions under which the permit is granted. Environmental mitigation measures are included in the permitting conditions and approved by the relevant competent authorities, so that all the main environmental and social impacts are systematically addressed, and that residual impacts are acceptable.

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

All the wind farms in the programme have undertaken an EIA process, which have been approved by the competent authority as part of the grant of planning process. All wind farms have obtained conditional grant of planning, and 6 of them have had their compliance approved by the relevant Competent Authorities. For 2 wind farms (Kill Hill and Booltiagh II), approval on planning compliance is expected to be obtained by end 2011. Evidence of planning compliance, along with the final planning compliance report approved by the competent authority, shall be obtained by the Bank for these two wind farms.

The relevant documentation on environmental permits, mitigation measures and public consultation has been received from the promoter. Non Technical Summaries of the environmental impact studies (the full studies for two wind farms) have been published on the website of the Bank.

The main residual environmental impacts are related to the potential degradation of some protected habitats (for the Booltiagh II, Ballymartin I & II, Garracummer, Glentane and Knockacummer wind farms), and the risk of bog slides (for the Garracummer wind farm). Three out of the eight wind farms (Garracummer, Glentane and Knockacummer) are within Special Protection Areas (SPAs). One other wind farm (Booltiagh II) is located adjacent to a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and two others (Ballymartin I & II) less than 5 km from Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). All of these areas for nature conservation were designated subsequent to the granting of the permission.

For most wind farms, the establishment of specific mitigation measures related to the preservation of Hen Harriers' habitats (habitat management plans) were included as grant of planning conditions. The plans have been screened by the Competent Authority, and considered in the granting of compliance on the related conditions. The promoter confirmed that appropriate assessments had been carried out by the competent authorities. Written confirmation by the competent authorities have been obtained that with the adoption of the proposed mitigation measures the six wind farms will not have a significant negative impact on the protected sites.

For the Garracummer project, the promoter has undertaken detailed geotechnical investigations on the site and has chosen a site layout to minimise the risk associated with bog slides. The promoter has prepared a bog slide management plan outlining the relevant risks and the planned mitigation measures, which the Bank found acceptable. On this basis of the information the risk of bog slides appears adequately mitigated.

Regarding the other programme's impacts, such as noise and visual impact, the mitigation measures put in place (e.g. the location of the wind farms at an appropriate distance from dwellings) by the promoter are considered acceptable.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

Absolute CO₂ emissions from the project in a standard year of operation will be zero.

The baseline emissions are calculated assuming that electricity generated by the project will displace generation from the existing thermal power mix in Ireland (natural gas). Compared to this baseline the project is estimated to save 381 kT of CO₂e/yr.

The loan is expected to cover about 37% of total investment outlays. Pro-rated to this amount, the absolute emissions will be zero and estimated emission savings will be 141 kT of CO₂e/yr.