

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name:	<i>Oweninny Onshore Windfarm Phase I</i>
Project Number:	<i>2017-0504</i>
Country:	<i>Ireland</i>
Project Description:	Construction and operation of up to 30 turbine onshore wind farm with a total capacity of 89MW in County Mayo, Ireland.
EIA required:	yes
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise ¹ :	yes

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

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

The project comprises the development, installation and operation of wind farm consisting of 29 wind turbines with a rotor diameter of 113 m hub height of 119 m and including the related civil and electrical infrastructure. It constitutes the first phase of a total development of up to 112 turbines in Mayo County in north western Ireland.

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 the overall size of the project and the proximity and partly overlap with several Natura 2000 areas, the project was screened-in and a full environmental impact assessment was carried out by An Bord Pleanála as well an appropriate assessment regarding the conservation objective of some of the concerned Natura 2000 sites. The Bord concluded that the project would not have an unacceptable environmental impact under the conditions as specified in the planning permission and with adequate mitigation measures in place,

The site is irregular with a total area of about 50 km² and was formerly used for peat harvesting for fuel for a nearby power station. It comprises mainly cutaway bog land with remaining intact bog blankets and reforested areas. Some of the bog sites, such as the Bellacorick Iron Flush (cSAC 0466) or Lough Dahybaun (cSAC 02177) enjoy particular protection as (candidate) Special Areas of Conservation, similar to other bog areas in the closer surrounding of the project. Such sites are excluded from the project area.

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.

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Major ecological characteristics of the sites including rare and protected plant species depend on the particular hydrological condition and the iron rich underground flows. To avoid or limit disturbance of these flows pile foundation will be used.

The open bogland is a habitat of some species listed in the Annex of the EU Habitats directive and/or the Irish Red List and classified as near threatened, such as Otter, Pine Marten and Irish Hare, Leisler's bat or common lizard. However, they are considered unlikely to be affected by the project

A total of 29 bird species of (mainly medium) conservation concern in Ireland were recorded on site but mostly in small number only. The turbines siting has avoided areas rated as of ecological importance, especially remaining intact bog area or breeding and roosting sites. Further regular bird monitoring is required during operation to assess the wind farms impact and to define additional mitigation measures as applicable.

14 individual properties are located at a distance of 1000 to 1200 m to the turbines and might be affected by the turbines. A shadow flicker analyses has demonstrated that the expected shadow flickers at all potentially affected houses are significantly below the recommended limits of 30 hours per year.

Noise levels resulting from the operation of the turbines were calculated with the conclusion that the limits as set in the Planning Guidance by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government are respected at the noise sensitive locations.

Noise levels from constructions activities were calculated and considered as being well within the limits commonly imposed for construction sites is expected from construction activities and of rather temporary nature. Further noise monitoring shall take place during construction and operation.

To avoid disturbance and visual impact to the nearby housing, the transmission line will be realised as underground cable.

During the detailed planning one of the 30 initially planned turbine sites was abandoned for environmental reasons.

EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise

The direct CO₂ equivalent emissions of the wind farms are considered negligible.

In accordance with the Bank's current Carbon Footprint methodology it is calculated that based on the avoidance of electricity generation from a combination of existing and new power plants in Ireland (75% operating margin and 25% build margin), the total relative effect of the project is a net reduction in CO₂ equivalent emissions by 175.3 kt CO₂e/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

Social Assessment, where applicable

The wind farm site is owned by one of the promoters' JV partner, which is the peat developing company. As a former peat harvesting site, the land is not suitable for agricultural activities. No physical or economic displacement took place.

The overall region is sparsely populated with little economic activities. Tourism is a significant income factor in the area and a concern was raised that outdoor activities such as hiking or



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fishing could be limited. Only during the construction phase access to the site will be restricted for safety reasons.

To create new points of touristic interest, a visitor centre will be established, providing insight into the history of power generation, peat production, wind energy development, bog rehabilitation and the social history of the area. In addition it shall serve as a facility for community activities.

Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The local officials and residents as well as the general public were informed on the project through announcements, meetings and information booklets.

Consultation meetings have taken place with the concerned authorities and interest groups such as National Parks and Wildlife Service, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), National Trust for Ireland, Mayo County Council and the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, and telecommunication companies. Public consultations were held in two communities.

Key issues during the public consultations were employment opportunities for the local population and community benefits from the project. The project will contribute to a community fund. Further important topics were the noise and visual impact of the site, boundary issues and site access as well as fishing rights.

Consultations will be continued during the further development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the information available and subject to the proposed loan condition, the project is acceptable for Bank financing.

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