Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Appendix 15.1 Visual Impact Assessment at Selected Viewpoints

Table A15.1a Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Strong association	Moderate association	Mild association	Negligible association

Susceptibility / Values Associated with the View	VP1	VP2	VP3	VP4	VP5	VP6	VP7	VP8	VP9	VP10	VP11	VP12	VP13	VP14	VP15	VP16	VP17	VP18	VP19	VP20	VP21	VP22	VP23	VP24
Susceptibility of receptor																								
group to changes in view																								
Recognised scenic value of the view																								
Views from within highly																								
sensitive landscape areas																								
Intensity of use, popularity (number of viewers)																								
Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views																								
Sense of remoteness /																								
tranquillity at the viewing location																								
Degree of perceived																								
naturalness																								
Presence of striking or																								
noteworthy features																								
Sense of Historical, cultural																								
and / or spiritual																								
significance																								
Rarity or uniqueness of the view																								
Integrity of the landscape																								
character within the view																								
Sense of place at the																								
viewing location																								
Sense of awe																								
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	М	м	м	н	м	М	ML	м	ML	L	ML	ML	мL	ML	м	М	ML	мL	м	м	нм	м	нм	н

Table A15.1b Visual Impact Assessments at Selected View Points

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
VP1	Western way at Altderg – This is a broad open view from a quiet local access road at the northern extents of the Bellacorrick Basin near the headwaters of the Owenboy River. The Western Way long-distance walking route passes through this locale in an east- west direction as it skirts the foothills of the northern extents of the Nephin range. The view take sin a combination of vast peat bog on flat ground and forestry on raised and gently sloping ground with a backdrop of the western portion of the Nephin range. The wind turbines from the Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farms occupy much of the distant middle ground.	Medium	Only seven of the northernmost turbines from the proposed development will be visible to the right of a forested spur ridge that otherwise substantially screens the remaining turbines. They will be seen amongst twice as many turbines from the Oweninny Phase I development that present slightly larger due their relative proximity. The proposed turbines add marginally to the intensity of wind energy development in the heart of the basin, but not the overall extent. They will also add a degree of clutter by overlapping with the Phase I turbines in perspective. Overall, they make only a minor contribution to the quantum of turbines within view and will only have a Low magnitude of impact.	Slight / negative / long term
VP2	Western way at Sheskin – This is a vast elevated view across the Bellacorrick Basin from the north- eastern foothills that form part of its enclosure. The view takes in a fore-to-middle distance context of peatland that is partly cloaked in various stages of conifer plantation. Nephin beg and the Nephin range form a dramatic backdrop around the southern and western extent of the basin with less enclosure to the southeast. The full extents of the Oweninny Phase I & Phase II wind farm development can be seen occupying the middle ground.	Medium	The proposed turbines will intersperse themselves with the existing turbines within the heart of the basin at a comparable scale so that they appear as one large consolidated development. In some cases the proposed turbines fill conspicuous gaps between existing turbines and at other times they overlap with them, but other than for the easternmost turbine the effect is one of intensification rather than extending the established turbine envelope. The proposed turbines will add slightly to the visual presence and intensity of wind energy development in view, but this is now a well-established and well accommodated feature in this vast peatland setting and the impact on visual amenity is deemed to be Medium-low.	Moderate-slight / negative / long term
VP3	Local Road at Srahmeen – This is a very similar visual context to that described for VP1 from the northern end of the Bellacorrick basin except that is closer to both a subtle intervening forested ridge and the existing Oweninny Phase I turbines. The Phase II turbines can be seen further in the distance to the west.	Medium	The same seven turbines that could be clearly seen in VP1 can also be seen amongst the Oweninny Phase I turbines in the heart of the bog. However, eight of those that had been screened by the forested ridge in VP1 are now partially visible above it (hubs an partial blade sets). Whilst it is a more ambiguous view of the latter, this is ameliorated by the more legible view of the former. The visible extent of	Moderate-slight / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
			wind turbines has been extended noticeably to the east, but otherwise the effect is one of intensification rather than a distinct change in the nature of the view. Overall, the magnitude of effect is deemed to be Medium-low.	
VP4	Local Road at Carrowmore Lake – This is a pleasant view (designated scenic route) across Carrowmore Lake towards the gently western slopes of the Nephin range, which are cloaked in a combination of forestry and naturalistic moorland. There is little built development in view excepts for a scattering of small dwellings on the opposite shores and a handful of turbine blades rotating on a low skyline saddle to the east.	High	The proposed turbines will not be visible within this 'illustrative' view and thus, the magnitude of impact is deemed to be Negligible by default.	Imperceptible / negative / long term
VP5	Local road at Doobehy – This is a slightly elevated view from the end of a local road and adjacent farmhouse that represents one of the most westerly residences within the farmed landscape that occupies the eastern half of the study area. Indeed the transition from managed grassland to peatland, scrub and forestry occurs just beyond the brow of the foreground terrace. Beyond is the vast and open landscape of the Bellacorrick basin contained in the westerly distance by the Nephin range, but largely uncontained to the northwest. The considerable number of turbines from Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farms run away from the viewer through the middle ground, their scale varying with distance.	Medium	The proposed turbines will be much nearer than their existing counterparts and will considerably increase both the lateral and vertical visual envelope occupied by wind turbines. Indeed, wind energy development will go from being a distinctive background feature of the view to a prominent and defining feature of the westward view. However, in this viewing context the proposed turbines are not spatially overbearing and notwithstanding the number and visual extent of turbines now within the vista, they are well accommodated in what reads as an appropriate strategic area for wind energy development. The larger scale of the nearer proposed turbines relative to their existing counterparts generates a strong sense of perspective and layout depth that serves to accentuate the vastness of the view. The layout is also highly legible with even spacing that tends to draw attention away from the clutter associated with some of the existing turbines in the distance. On balance of these factors, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be High-medium.	Substantial-moderate / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
VP6	Western way at Tawnaghmore – This is a vast view from a slightly elevated section of forest road near the western edge of the Bellacorrick basin that also hosts a section of the Western Way. It is an extensive vista across the open peatland basin which is now occupied by the wind turbines of the Owenniny Phase II and then Phase I turbines throughout the fore-to-middle distance with a strong sense of perspective generated by the scale difference between the nearest and furthest units. There is some minor containment of the view to the north by mature forestry and in the distance to the south by the Nephin range, which wraps around the western side of the basin.	Medium	The proposed turbines will all be fully visible, but beyond the existing turbines and centrally located among them. The effect is one of intensification and concentration of wind energy development within the central portion of the basin, but without increasing its overall visual envelope. Despite the density of turbines now contained within the central portion of the basin, there is surprisingly little overlap and clutter. This is testimony to the ability of this vast landscape setting to assimilate this degree of wind energy development in what is unmistakably a strategic area for same. For these reasons the magnitude of visual impact of the proposed development is deemed to be Low	Slight / negative / long term
VP7	R315 at Ballycloy – this is a relatively enclosed views albeit from a slightly elevated section of this busy regional road between Crossmolina and Myogownagh. It is a foreground scene of rolling farmland, a small pond and a cluster of rural dwellings and outbuildings. Tree-lined hedgerows combine with the rolling topography to contain the view in the near middle distance.	Medium-low	Only blade tips of a couple of turbines are even potentially visible in this context through dense skyline vegetation to the west. These will not be noticed by a casual observer and thus, the magnitude of visual impact is Negligible.	Imperceptible / neutral / long term
VP8	Western way at Ballmonnelly- Like the nearby VP6, this is a vast view from a slightly elevated section of local road near the western edge of the Bellacorrick basin that also hosts a section of the Western Way. It is an extensive vista across the open peatland basin which is now occupied by the wind turbines of the Owneninny Phase II and then Phase I turbines throughout the fore-to-middle distance with a strong sense of perspective generated by the scale difference between the nearest and furthest units. The Nephin range wraps to the south of the view with Nephin Beg a distinctive distant feature. There is a small dispersed settlement to the west of this viewpoint, but dwellings	Medium	The proposed turbines will all be fully visible, but genrally beyond the existing turbines and centrally located among them. The effect is one of intensification and concentration of wind energy development within the central portion of the basin, but without increasing its overall visual envelope. Despite the density of turbines now contained within the central portion of the basin, there is surprisingly little overlap and clutter. This is testimony to the ability of this vast landscape setting to assimilate this degree of wind energy development in what is unmistakably a strategic area for same. For these reasons the magnitude of visual impact of the proposed development is deemed to be Low.	Slight / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
	are generally oriented to the south and few have the view described above.			
VP9	Local road at Formoylo – This is a relatively open view to the northland northwest, but somewhat foreshortened by a low farmed ridge in the near middle distance that also hosts a small stand of conifers. Around 16 turbines from the Oweninny Phase I wind farm can also be seen to varying degrees above the same rise. There is a small hillock just to the north with a farmhouse on its eastern side. Like the other scattering of dwellings on this quiet local road, it is oriented to take in broad easterly views (in the opposite direction to the site).	Medium-low	The nearest cluster of around 10 of the proposed turbines is seen in a clear and legible fashion from here rising prominently, but not overbearingly, above the foreground rise to the northwest. The more westerly cluster of seven turbines can be seen beyond at a considerably smaller scale that is akin to the existing turbines within the view. All of the turbines are contained within a section of the view bookended by the conifer stand to the left and the hillock to the right. It is a condensed and intense view of more than 30 turbines, but there is a strong sense of perspective and distance generated by the scale differential between the nearest and furthest turbines with the latter also presenting with low contrast against the sky. Wind turbines are already a characteristic feature of this view but they will become a more defining one. Albeit, without intruding on the broad views afforded to the east. Overall the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium.	Moderate / negative / long term
VP10	N59 at Knockagarravaun	Low	The proposed turbines will not be visible within this 'illustrative' view and thus, the magnitude of impact is deemed to be Negligible by default.	Imperceptible / neutral / long term
VP11	Local road at Shanvolahan - This is a pleasant, but not extensive view from a transitional landscape of fringe farmland adjacent to the wider Bellacorrick Bog. The transition is apparent in this view as a foreground of natural bog grassland interspersed with more elevated (better drained) areas of managed grassland and forestry. There are also occasional dwellings dotted throughout the farmland ocntext. Rising in the middle distance to the northwest at a modest scale are	Medium-low	The proposed turbines will be seen to varying degrees from full vertical extent to just blade tips above and between the intervening topography and vegetation. The nearest and most exposed turbines are seen at a prominent scale, which is considerably greater than their existing counterparts beyond and yet they do not appear spatially dominant in this setting. The layout of turbines is legible and although there is some overlapping with the turbines beyond, the scale differential between them highlights the	Moderate / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
	around a dozen trubines from the Oweninny Phase I development.		substantial separation distances and the depth of the layout. Whilst the proposed turbines add considerably to the scale and extent of wind energy development within view, this does not appear out of scale or out of context. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium.	
VP12	Local Road at Eskaragh – This is an open view to the northwest from a quiet local road that serves a cluster of rural residences that can be seen in the lower middle ground. These are contained within small farmed fields flanked by blocks of mature forestry that form the middle distance skyline. The blade sets and partial blade sets of around 20 turbines from the Oweninny Phase I Wind Farm can be seen rising above this forested skyline at a modest scale.	Medium-low	The proposed turbines will rise to the fore of their existing counterparts and at a much increased scale due to closer proximity. The proposed turbines do not increase the lateral extent of wind energy development to any noticeable degree, but they considerably increase the vertical imprint. Whilst not overbearing in this broad landform and landcover context, the nearest turbines present some scale conflict relative to the middle ground dwellings, which they lie almost directly beyond. The proposed development considerably increases the scale and quantum of wind energy development and makes it a defining feature of this view rather than a background one. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be High.	Substantial-moderate / negative / long term
VP13	N59 at Bellacorrick Bridge – This is a view north along the barely defined corridor of the Oweninny River from the 'Musical Bridge' at Bellacorrick. The river is flanked by both managed and naturalistic grassland and there are stands of conifer plantation in the near middle distance that partly conceal the wind turbines beyond. These consist of the small turbines from the Bellacorrick Wind Farm and around 20 of the much larger turbines from the Oweninny Phase I Wind farm further beyond that are more openly visible on alignment with the River.	Medium-low	The proposed turbines would be seen at a similar scale and within a similar context as the Oweninny Phase I turbines, except that they are offset to the right of the river alignment where they are substantially screened by the intervening conifer stands. Only the blades of the around 9 of the nearest turbines and the hubs of a pair of the more distant turbines will be visible, albeit the components present at a reasonable scale and will rotate against the tree tops in a noticeable manner. This will also have the effect of broadening the lateral extent of wind energy development considerably further to the east. Wind turbines and the Bellacorrick power station before them have characterised this view for decades so the nature of the view will not change – inly the intensity and extent of wind energy development in view. The partial view of turbine blade rotating against the tree tops sets may also generate some visual irritation, but this is offset by the more	Moderate-slight / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
			comprehensible view of other turbines. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium-low.	
VP14	Junction of N59 / and R312 (Western Way) – Although only a short distance east of VP13, this is a more open and expansive viewing context. The foreground consists of scrub and natural bog grassland, giving way to a middle ground band of conifers and then the turbines from the Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farms to the north and northwest respectively. Also running across the foreground is a series of high voltage overhead lines and pylons / twin poles sets.	Medium-low	The proposed turbines will slightly overlap with the right hand side of the Phase I turbines where they will seamlessly intermingle in terms of scale and layout to form a single cohesive group of around 50 visible turbines. The scale differential between the nearest and furthest turbines emphasises the vastness of the bog and the depth of the layout without the benefit of seeing the turbine bases below the middle ground conifer band. Although the lateral extent of wind energy development is noticeably increased, there is still reasonable portions of this broad northerly vista that does not contain turbines. This is testimony to the scale of this landscape and its ability to absorb a strategic scale of wind energy development. The magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium.	Moderate-slight / negative / long term
VP15	N59 at Lough Dahybaun - This is a broad panoramic view to the north from an elevated section of the N59 overlooking Lough Dahybaun in the lower middle ground. The lough is surrounded by natural grassland except on its northern side where a broad blanket of conifer plantations crosses the landscape in the middle distance. The next layer is one of numerous turbines from the small Bellacorrick wind farm and the much larger Oweninny Phase I and Phase II developments which spread across the northern quarters. In the far distance are the low moorland and forest covered ridges of the northern Nephin range.	Medium	The proposed turbines will be the nearest to the viewer and therefore have a larger scale than most of those beyond. The proposed turbines will also extend the lateral visual envelope of wind energy development considerably further to the east. The net effect is that, as well as adding to the intensity of turbines within the northern Bellacorrick basin, the proposed development also makes a noticeable contribution to the scale and extent of it. Where it is element that contributes to the character of the landscape and this view it will become a more defining feature of it. Nonetheless, it is a clear and legible view of the development and the larger scale of the nearest proposed turbines relative to those beyond generates a strong sense of perspective, scale and depth that empathises the vast extent of the basin. Vastness is one of the key values of this landscape and the views of it and also one of the reasons	Substantial-moderate / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
			that so many large turbines can be accommodated in what has become a strategic area for this form of renewable energy development. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be High-medium.	
VP16	N59 at Dooleeg More – This view is sightly further east along the N59 than VP15 and represents a small cluster of dwellings that top a small rise in the local terrain and enjoy broad vistas to the north. These vistas consist of a plateau of natural grassland in the foreground backed by a band of conifer plantations across the middle ground. Sections of distant forested / moorland slopes can also be seen at the northern end of the Bellacorrick basin. Rising above this context throughout the northern quarters are the considerable number of turbines from the Oweninny Phase I and Phase II developments.	Medium	The proposed turbines will occupy nearer ground to the north than their existing counterparts of the Oweninny Phase I development and will therefore, present at a considerably larger scale without appearing overbearing. They will occupy a considerable portion of the view and will extend wind energy development noticeably further to the east. Rather than being a background element of the view, wind turbines will become a more defining feature of it. The larger scale of the proposed turbines prevents a sense of clutter and overlapping with the turbines and sets up a strong sense of perspective that highlights the vast extent of the basin landscape, which is not immediately apparent within this view. On balance of these factors, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be High-medium.	Substantial-moderate / negative / long term
VP17	N59 at Crossmolina – this is a view from a slightly elevated section of the N59 exiting the settlement of Crossmolina to the west. It is one of the few locations within the settlement that affords north-westerly views, as the village is generally focussed around the River Deel corridor just to the east. Beyond the foreground garage is framed view of farmland and the Crossmolina cemetery following by more rolling farmland out to a middle distance vegetated skyline that also hosts the partial blade sets of turbines from the Oweninny Phase I Wind Farm.	Medium-low	All of the proposed turbines will be visible to some degree through between foreground elements rising to a greater degree above the middle distance skyline than their existing counterparts. They are contained in a modest section of the hinterland view and are seen at an equally modest scale from this distance, but they are a noticeable background feature. Whilst the proposed turbines have a relatively even spacing and the view of their full blade sets is legible, they will generate some visual clutter with the existing turbines that they will appear amongst. While there is some sense of layout depth / separation with those existing turbines there may also be some scale confusion. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium-low.	Moderate-slight / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
VP18	N59 at Coolturk – This view is from a small dispersed settlement that lines the N59 and also hosts the substantial Coolturk Quarry. It is a channelled view along the road corridor framed by earthen embankments to the left and woodland scrub to the right. The distant landscape on alignment with the road hosts a combination of forestry and wind turbines of which there are around 13 visible at a modest but noticeable scale.	Medium-low	Around seven of the proposed turbines will present in the same window of visibility along the road alignment as that occupied by existing turbine. However they will be much larger by comparison, due to their nearer proximity. They are far from overbearing and they set up a good sense of perspective with the smaller turbines beyond, thereby giving an impression of the extent of the landscape they occupy. It is not considered that the proposed turbines will contribute to a visual impact of greater than Medium-low.	Moderate-slight / negative / long term
VP19	R312 (Western Way) at Derry Lower – The view from here is vast and horizontal in nature and dominated by a foreground plateau of natural bog grassland that limits the view beyond to narrow bands of conifer plantation and distant low ridges. The only vertical imprint is provided by foreground high voltage lines and the numerous turbines from the Bellacorrick, and Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farm developments that spread across the middle ground.	Medium	The proposed turbines will present at a marginally greater scale than the nearest of the existing turbines from the Oweninny Phase I development, with which, they will slightly overlap and extend further to the east. Whilst this makes for a seamless connection with that development, the resulting turbine cluster is a considerable one of around 45 visible turbines, albeit with the loss of the existing Bellacorrick turbines. The scale difference between the nearest and furthest turbines of both the existing and proposed developments further reinforces the vast scale of the receiving landscape, which appears far from overwhelmed by the presence of so many tall wind turbines. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium-low.	Moderate-slight / negative / long term
VP20	Local road (Western Way) at Derry Upper – This view is very similar in nature to that described for VP19 as it is on the same alignment only a short distance further from the site. It is broad and horizontal in nature and dominated by a foreground of natural bog grassland. Conifer plantations and moorland cover the distant low ridges. Again, the numerous turbines from the Bellacorrick, and Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farm developments that spread across the middle ground.	Medium	The proposed turbines will present at a similar scale to the nearest of the existing turbines from the Oweninny Phase I development. They will partly overlap with the more distant easternmost turbines of that development and extend further to the east. This makes for a relatively seamless connection with Oweinnny Phase I, but the resulting turbine cluster is a considerable one of around 45 visible turbines. The scale difference between the nearest and furthest turbines of both the existing and proposed developments reinforces the extent of the receiving landscape, which is not dominated by the presence of so many tall wind	Moderate-slight / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
			turbines. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium-low.	
VP21	Local road at Keenagh – This is a vast and elevated panoramic view to the north across the Bellacorrick basin from the small, dispersed settlement of Keenagh near its southern end. The entire fore-to-middle ground is dominated by natural bog grassland tracked intermittently by fence lines, power lines and the R312 regional road. In the distance to the northeast is rolling farmland, whilst forestry dominates the landcover further west and in the far distance are the low moorland / forested ridges of the northern Nephin range. Rising against this distant terrain backdrop and the sky above it are more than 70 turbines from the Bellacorrick, and Oweninny Phase I and Phase II wind farms.	High-medium	The proposed turbines will appear towards the eastern end of the existing arrays overlapping with a considerable portion of the Oweninny Phase I development as well as extending further to the east of it. The proposed turbines are of a noticeably larger scale due to both relative distance and their slightly greater height. However, the scale difference does help to emphasise the vastness of the basin landscape and the depth of and separation distances between turbines within the layouts. The added presence of the proposed turbines in-combination with the existing turbines makes wind energy development an even more defining feature of the northern Bellacorrick basin. However, this does not have great bearing for the visual amenity at this southern end where the wind turbines to the north are just a distinctive background feature. Overall, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low.	Slight / negative / long term
VP22	Scenic Route east of Killala This is an enclosed view between two lines of farmed dunes where the dividing hedgerows are low and windswept. There are occasional dwellings above the road that are positioned to take advantage of seaward views to the north.	Medium	The proposed turbines will not be visible from here due to terrain screening, so the magnitude of visual impact is Negligible by default.	Imperceptible / neutral / long term
VP23	Scenic route east of Lough Conn This is a view across lowland farmland that rises gently towards a low middle ground rise, which screens much of the landscape beyond. Only the Nephin range rises in the distance to the west.	High Medium	Occasional blade tips from some of the proposed turbines may be discernible in clear viewing conditions rotating amongst the vegetation on the middle distance skyline. They will have a low degree of contrast against the sky at this distance of over 18km and the magnitude of impact is deemed to be Low-negligible.	Slight-imperceptible / negative / long term

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance / quality / duration of Impact
VP24	Summit of Nephin Beg This is a vast panoramic vista in all directions from the high conical summit of Nephin Beg. The view to the north stretches across the mottle Bellacorrick Basin and its mix of bog, cutaway bog forestry and also including a reasonable density of wind turbines at its northern end. A farmed and settled landscape can be seen at closer quarters to the north east, whilst the Nephin range wraps around the view from the west to north.	High	The proposed turbines will be visible to the fore, but very much a part of the collection of turbines that already exist at the northern end of the Bellacorrick Basin forming a sinuous and extensive array. Whilst they add slightly to the extent and intensity of wind energy development at the northern end of the Bellacorrick Basin, they do not have a material bearing on the nature of the view. Consequently, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low-negligible.	Slight / negative / long term