

Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Appendix 1.3 Community Engagement Report

Bord na Móna

**Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3
Community Engagement
Report**

Dated: March 2023

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Part 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Report has been prepared to record the consultation carried out with the local community in respect of the proposed Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3 development. Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. has carried out an extensive consultation process in relation to the proposed development with local stakeholders, members of the public, residents, and community groups. The objective of the consultations was to ensure that the views and concerns of all were considered as part of the project design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

This Report is informed by a number of wind energy industry best practices and guidelines namely: -

1. The Wind Energy Development Guidelines¹ (2006) state that:

“While it is not a mandatory requirement, it is strongly recommended that developers of a wind energy project should engage in active consultation and dialogue with the local community at an early stage in the planning process, ideally prior to submitting a planning application”.

2. Preferred Draft Approach to Wind Energy Development in Ireland² (June 2017) which stated the following with respect to planning applications for wind farms:

“Planning applications must contain a Community Report prepared by the applicant which will specify how the final proposal reflects community consultation. The Community Report must also outline steps taken to ensure that the proposed development will be of enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned”.

3. The Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines³ (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019) has retained this position stating the following:

“In order to promote the observance of best practice, planning authorities should require applicants to prepare and submit a Community Report with their planning application and a condition on any subsequent planning permission should require developers to carry out the development in accordance with the approved Community Report”.

This report outlines the consultation and community engagement initiatives undertaken by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. prior to the submission of the planning application. It also outlines the main issues identified during this process and the steps taken to ensure that the proposed development will be of enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned.

¹ The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Wind Energy Planning Guidelines 2006, p. 19

² The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Information Note Review of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 “Preferred Draft Approach”, 2017 p.8

³ The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019, p. 42

Part 2 Consultation with the Local Community

2.1 Notification of Local Representatives

In advance of engagement with the local community, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. by way of electronic communication in June 2020, informed Mayo County Councillors for the Municipal District of Ballina of the company's intention to develop a wind farm on Oweninny bog group to be known as Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3.

As part of this communication, the Councillors for the above-mentioned Municipal District were provided with a Project Information Booklet, A2 Double sided Map, Project Information Letter and a Feedback Questionnaire. The purpose of this communication was to provide them with information on the proposed development and invite them to get in touch with the project team.

In addition to informing the Councillors of the above mentioned Municipal District about the proposed development, all TDs representing the Dáil Éireann Constituency of Mayo were also sent an electronic communication in June 2020 to provide them with information on the proposed development and invite them to get in touch with the project team.

In December 2020, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. by way of electronic communication, informed Mayo County Councillors for the Municipal District of Ballina of the second round of Community Engagement Clinics which due to the COVID-19 pandemic would be held online by appointment in January 2020 by appointment only. The purpose of this session was to provide Councillors with more information on the proposed development, namely the proposed turbine layout. Also contained in this electronic communication to the Councillors was a project information booklet and the proposed turbine layout map.

In addition to informing the Councillors of the above mentioned Municipal District about the proposed development, all TDs representing the Dáil Éireann Constituencies of Mayo were also sent the same electronic communication in December 2020 and invited to book appointment for the above-mentioned online Community Engagement Clinics regarding the proposed development.

2.2 Notification of Local Community

To inform residents about the proposed development, the project Community Liaison Officer distributed information regarding the proposed development to households within 2km of the proposed development site boundary. The Community Liaison Officer visited approx. 80 homes between 9th June and 23rd June 2020.

The information pack distributed to each household consisted of a:

- Cover Letter
- Project Information Booklet

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- Map of the Location of the Proposed Development Site.
- Feedback Questionnaire

Ahead of the second round of Community Information Sessions in December 2020 the Community Liaison Officer distributed information regarding the proposed development to households within approx. 2km of the proposed development site boundary. The Community Liaison Officer visited approx. 80 homes between December 1st and December 14th 2020. The information distributed to each household consisted of:

- Project Information Booklet.
- Community Engagement Clinic Information.
- Draft Wind Turbine Layout Map
- Feedback Questionnaire (with Freepost Envelope)
- Project contact details

2.3 Community Information Sessions - Round One

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place regarding public gatherings in June 2020 it was not possible to arrange formal Community Information Sessions in the local area. Instead, a dedicated project website was launched and a project information pack containing all the information that would normally be displayed at such sessions was distributed to households within 2km of the proposed development site boundary. The Community Liaison Officer visited approx. 80 homes between 9th June and 23rd June 2020. . Due to Covid 19 restrictions in place at the time, the CLO was unable to knock on people's door, however, they distributed information packs to each household consisting of a:

- Cover Letter
- Project Information Booklet
- Map of the Location of the Proposed Development Site.
- Feedback Questionnaire
- opt In and opt Off of Communications Form
- Freepost Envelope

The Project Information Booklet contained information on the following:

- Proposed Location of the Development.
- Irish Government Policy on Renewable Energy.
- The Strategic Infrastructure Planning Process.
- Site Layout Design.
- Proposed Development.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report.
- Photomontages of the Proposed Development.
- Setback Distance from Properties.
- Proposed Turbine Locations.
- How Wind Turbines Operate.

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- Parts of a Wind Turbine Explained.
- Potential Wind Farm Recreational Facilities.
- Local benefits of the Development.
- Contact Information.
- Overview of Bord na Móna Projects

2.3.3 Feedback

Members of the public were invited to submit comments, concerns, and opinions regarding the proposed development through a feedback form included in the information pack. A

The main concerns raised during this stage of the consultation were as follows were:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of Turbines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proximity to Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Benefits & Amenity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Height of turbines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual Impact		

2.4 Community Information Sessions - Round Two

In December 2020, the Community Liaison Officer circulated project information packs to all homes within 2km of the proposed development site boundary containing details of the proposed draft layout and project information pack. Face-to-face Public Consultation Clinics, to discuss the draft layout, were planned for January 2021 but had to be postponed due to the reintroduction of Covid-19 restrictions over Christmas.

The Public Consultation Clinics were rescheduled, as soon as Covid restrictions allowed, for Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th August 2021 at the Oweninny Visitor Centre. In total, 8 No. appointments were scheduled.

2.4.3 Attendance and Feedback

The main queries raised during this stage of the consultation, as recorded by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. staff included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proximity of Turbines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of turbines
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Height of turbines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roads/Local Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noise

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2.5 Publication of Final Layout

In June 2022, the project's Community Liaison Officer delivered the proposed final layout for the proposed development on an A2 double-sided map to homes within 2km of a proposed turbine. The map depicted the proposed final turbine layout, substation location, internal road infrastructure and amenity pathways. The map also included distance bands out to 2km from a proposed turbine to enable members of the community identify the proximity of the nearest turbine to their residential property.

2.6 Direct Correspondence and Meetings

As outlined in the preceding sections, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. engaged with the local community on an ongoing basis throughout the pre-planning stage through Community Information Sessions, written communication with households and meetings with local representatives.

In addition to this, at the request of individuals, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. also facilitated eight meetings with individual residents to discuss the proposed project and ideas/issues/concerns they had in relation to the proposed development via the clinics by appointment held in August 2021.

2.7 Dedicated Contact Details

Since the project was first announced in June 2020, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. has provided dedicated contact details for the proposed development, including a dedicated phone number, email address and postal address. To date, these channels have facilitated 59 enquiries about the proposed development.

2.8 Project Website

A dedicated project website www.oweninnywindfarmphasethree.ie was launched in June 2020. This website has been updated throughout the project lifecycle with information about the proposed development, such as information distributed at Community Information Sessions, news, events, dedicated contact details for the project team, and downloadable material relating to the proposed location, project information booklets, layout maps, and communications with the public.

2.9 Dedicated Community Liaison Officer

In June 2020, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. appointed a dedicated Community Liaison Officer (CLO) for the proposed development to ensure a continued 'on the ground' engagement presence with the local community. As the company's main point of contact for the local community and vice versa, their role is to represent, communicate, consult and inform residents through regular updates via formal and informal meetings such as house calls, one to one meetings and clinics. The frequency of these updates was somewhat impeded by the Covid-19 restrictions implemented across the country during 2020 and 2021. However, the CLO endeavoured to provide updates when available and in line with Government Guidance on Covid 19 and house visits. As outlined above the Community Liaison Officer has visited circa 80 homes in the locality of the proposed development on a number of occasions to ensure they are kept informed about the project.

Part 3 Enduring Economic Benefit

4.1 Enduring Economic Benefit

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. recognises that the Preferred Draft Approach to Wind Energy Development in Ireland **Error! Bookmark not defined.** (June 2017) and the Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland (December 2016) stipulates that wind farm developers should identify enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned from the proposed development and should also highlight short term economic benefits to the communities concerned.

4.1.1 Short Term Economic Benefits

During the construction and decommissioning phases, it is estimated that at peak construction between 100-120 jobs will be created. This in turn will have a knock-on effect on the local economy through the supply of services to the workforce. While at a regional level additional employment will be created in the region through the supply of services and materials (such as stone and concrete) to the wind farm.

Additionally, the payment of a development contribution to the relevant local authority in respect of public infrastructure and facilities will potentially provide benefits to the local community through schemes such as the refurbishment, upgrading or replacement of roads, car parks and car parking places; sewers and waste water facilities, drains or water mains; provision of open spaces/parks, community facilities, amenities and landscaping works etc.

4.1.2 Long Term Economic Benefits

The proposed project will provide many long-term economic benefits to the communities surrounding the proposed development including:

Employment

Once operational, the wind farm will support 2-3 long term, high quality technical jobs in operation and maintenance.

Rates

Annual rates paid by the wind farm to the relevant local County Council will potentially support the provision of local services.

Community Benefit Fund

In addition, a range of other benefits associated with the development will be provided to local residents (Near Neighbours) and local community groups through an annual Community Benefit Fund.

The Funds shall be distributed as follows:

- Households within a prescribed distance of a wind turbine will be offered an annual contribution which can be put towards their electricity usage; the completion of energy

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measures on the property; purchase of electric vehicle and/or education support. This is in line with existing near neighbour schemes that are active at Bord na Móna's Mountlucas Wind Farm and Bruckana Wind Farm.

- Local Community Groups and not-for-profit organisations around the proposed development that promote the sustainable development of the area. A key criterion is that the projects and initiatives will benefit the communities surrounding the wind farm.

The value of the fund for the Community Benefit Fund will be directly proportional to the installed capacity and/or energy produced by the wind farm, which based on current proposals, could be in the region of €10 million over the lifetime of the project.

Part 4 Conclusion

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. has pro-actively engaged and consulted with the local community from an early stage during the pre-application phase. The consultation process has been an extremely valuable exercise and has provided a detailed, and enhanced understanding of the key issues and concerns of the local community, which have ultimately shaped the final project proposal.

The consultation process has been an extremely positive and valuable learning experience for everyone involved. It has provided the company with a detailed and inclusive pathway to understanding of key issues and concerns of the community which have influenced, shaped, and ultimately enhanced the final project proposal.

The development of the proposed Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3 will provide an enduring economic benefit to the communities surrounding the proposed development for both residents and community groups, employment during the construction and operation of the development and through the annual rates payable to the local authority.