

1. INTRODUCTION

Additional information relevant to Section 1 is presented in Appendix A in Volume 2 of 3 of the EIS.

1.1 SCOPE

1.1.1 *The Project*

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been prepared to accompany an application by ESB Wind Development Limited to An Bord Pleanála for full planning permission to develop a wind energy development in Co. Kerry. It will comprise 38 wind turbines with a maximum overall height of up to 126 metres (m) and have a total electrical output of up to about 115 megawatts (MW).

In summary, the development comprises the amalgamation of two previously permitted wind energy projects, namely Barnastooka Wind Farm (14 wind turbines) and Grousemount Wind Farm (24 wind turbines). Overall, it comprises the same number of turbines as previously approved, all being located at equivalent locations to those approved and with a maximum overall dimensions of 126 m, also the same as (or marginally more than) approved.

The combined development will be known as Grousemount Wind Farm.

The full project comprises Grousemount Wind Farm, Coomataggart 110 kV Substation, which is located within the wind farm site, an underground cable connection from ESB Networks' Ballyvouskill 220/110 kV Substation near Millstreet, Co. Cork to Coomataggart Substation and minor associated works.

The wind farm proposal differs from the approved developments principally in terms of the electrical rating of the turbines to be installed. It also contains a number of modifications that will improve the constructability of the combined project.

The wind farm site location is shown in Figure 1.1.

In addition to the wind turbines, the wind farm includes wind turbine transformers and turbine hardstands (cranepads) at each turbine, access tracks, underground electrical cables linking the turbines with Coomataggart Substation, underground communication cables, anemometer masts, drainage infrastructure, borrow pits / repositories, limited tree felling, and all related site works and ancillary development.

The electricity generated at Grousemount Wind Farm will be exported to the national Electricity Network via underground cables from Coomataggart Substation, which is located within the wind farm site, to the ESB Networks' Ballyvouskill Substation near Millstreet, Co. Cork.

1.1.2 *Planning Application and Strategic Infrastructure Development*

The Planning and Development Act 2000 was amended in 2006 to require applications for planning permission for major infrastructure projects to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála rather than to the local planning authority, as would have previously been the case. In order to fall within the Strategic Infrastructure provisions of the 2000 Act, as amended, a proposed development must, inter alia, be of a class specified in the Seventh Schedule to the Act. Paragraph 1 of the Seventh Schedule, as amended in 2010, specifies, inter alia, the following class of development:

An installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts.

The conditions in Section 37A (2) are that:

37A (2)... "following consultations under Section 37B, the Board serves on the prospective applicant a notice in writing under that section stating that, in the opinion of the Board, the proposed development would, if carried out, fall within one or more of the following paragraphs, namely—

(a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,

(b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Spatial Strategy or in any regional planning guidelines in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,

(c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority."

ESB Wind Development Limited commenced pre-application consultation with An Bord Pleanála in July 2014. At the conclusion of the process, by decision dated 28th May 2015, An Bord Pleanála determined that the proposed Grousemount Wind Farm is considered a strategic infrastructure development.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act, as amended, a planning application for a development which comes within the scope of Section 37A must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The EIS is presented herein in the grouped-format structure with each category (Human Beings, Noise, etc.) being considered under the separate headings: Description of Existing Environment; Impact of the Development; Mitigation (where appropriate); and Conclusions (where appropriate).

The EIS considers all aspects of the project, i.e. Grousemount Wind Farm, Coomataggart 110 kV Substation within the wind farm site and the underground cable connection from Ballyvouskill 220/110 kV Substation to Coomataggart Substation.

It has been completed with broad reference to the following, which have published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements, (EPA, 2002).
- Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements, (EPA 2003).

Where potential impacts are identified, the classification of impacts in the assessment follows the descriptors provided in the Glossary of Impacts contained in the above EPA guidance.

The order of presentation has been adjusted to aid comprehension.

Attention has been paid throughout the EIS to the DoEHLG Windfarm Planning Guidelines for planning authorities issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) in 2006. These are designed to ensure consistency of approach to wind energy developments throughout the country and to provide clarity to prospective

developers and local communities.

It is currently envisaged that the rated electrical output of the Wind Farm will be about 115 MW. The exact output cannot be specified at this stage. Outputs of wind turbines are particular to the design of individual manufacturers and it is thus not possible in an open international competition, which is required by EU competition rules, to specify the exact output without prejudice or favour to one manufacturer. The tendering process will follow a grant of planning permission. The overall rating may thus ultimately be marginally more or less than cited. However, throughout the EIA, consideration of significant environmental impacts of the proposed development is based on the largest size of development foreseen. The choice of turbine model will not affect the assessment of impacts outlined herein.

As appropriate, the potential cumulative impacts arising from existing, consented and proposed wind farm developments within the general study area have been assessed.

Where appropriate, the EIS uses applicable information and data from the EISs that accompanied the planning application for the approved Barnastooka and Grousemount Wind Farms.

- Jennings O'Donovan and Partners – Barnastooka Wind Farm Environmental Impact Assessment (March 2010).
- ESB International - Grousemount Wind Farm Environmental Impact Assessment (December 2010).

Information and data has been adapted to reflect developments in the interim.

The EIS considers all phases of the life of the wind farm, i.e. construction, operation and decommissioning.

1.3 FORMAT OF EIS

1.3.1 Presentation

Appropriate methodologies have been used to assess the effects relating to each of the environmental topics that have been investigated as part of the EIA. These methodologies are based on recognised good practice and guidelines specific to each subject area, details of which are provided within each individual technical section.

It is required to describe the likely significant effects of the development on the environment in the EIS, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.

Within this EIS, significance is generally determined through combining the sensitivity of a receptor to an effect and the magnitude of the predicted change. This is generally undertaken through:

- Identifying baseline conditions of the site and its environs.
- Identifying the sensitivity of receptors that may be affected by changes in the baseline conditions.
- Predicting the magnitude of likely changes to the baselines.
- Assessing the significance of effect taking into account sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of effect.

- Identifying of appropriate mitigation measures.
- Assessing the significance of residual effects, taking account of any mitigation measures.

Mitigation is defined within the Regulations as measures designed to prevent, reduce or where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment. Within this EIS the following approach has been taken regarding mitigation:

- So far as possible, mitigation measures are embedded within the development, for example through maintaining appropriate separation distances between environmental receptors and wind turbines, and through incorporation of best practice approaches and construction techniques.
- Where mitigation measures are identified to prevent, reduce or offset likely significant adverse environmental effects, the mechanism through which such mitigation measures can be secured is identified.
- Where measures are identified that have the potential to prevent, reduce or offset adverse effects which are not significant but where it is considered that such measures are appropriate, then these are identified.

Every effort has been made in the preparation of the document to keep it as concise as possible while also ensuring that relevant material is adequately covered. The method of presentation can be summarised as follows:

The structure proposed for the EIS is as follows:

- Volume 1 – Non-technical Summary and Main EIS
- Volume 2 - Appendices to the Main EIS
- Volume 3 – Landscape and Visual Maps and Photomontages

It is also to be noted that a separate Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been submitted with the application.

Volume 1 of 2

- Section 1 provides an introduction to the project, describing the method of preparation and identifying those responsible.
- Section 2 provides a description of the proposed development in terms of the site and the operation and decommissioning of the scheme.
- Section 3 provides a description of the construction of the development.
- Section 4 outlines the energy policy context at international and national levels and the planning policy context in which the proposed development will take place.
- Section 5 considers alternatives to the proposed development in terms of electricity generation, site selection and windfarm configurations and layouts.
- Sections 6 – 18 consider the environmental impacts of the proposed development with detailed focus on the issues considered to be of potential significance.
- Section 19 considers the possible interaction of impacts outlined in Sections 6 – 18.

In an effort to minimise repetition and to keep the EIS as concise as possible, mitigation

measures that are applicable to a number of topics may or may not be repeated in the document. In general, only mitigation that is additional to consideration of the primary impacts is described.

While every effort is made to present together all details relating to individual topics, these should not be considered in isolation of others and without reference to context.

Volume 2 of 3

Supporting reports and various other documentation relevant to the contents of Volume 1 are presented.

Volume 3 of 3

For the purposes of easier viewing and clarity, Maps and Figures dealing with landscape impact are presented separately in Volume 3 of 3 in A3 and larger format.

1.3.2 Contributors

The EIS was prepared by ESBI Engineering & Facility Management Limited, Stephen Court, 18-21 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland and the following specialist sub-consultants contributed to the preparation:

- Aquatic Services Unit (UCC) – Aquatic Ecology (Underground Cable)
- AWN Consulting - Noise Monitoring
- Biosphere Environmental Services (BES) - Terrestrial Ecology
- Byrne Looby Partners – Geology & Soils (Peat Stability Review)
- Byrne Mullins & Associates - Cultural Heritage
- Conservation Services - Aquatic Ecology (Wind Farm)
- Cunnane Stratton Reynolds & Macroworks - Landscape
- Freshwater Bivalve Investigations – Aquatic Ecology (Pearl Mussel)
- Hydro-Environmental Services – Hydrology, Hydrogeology & Water Quality
- IGSL – Geotechnical Investigations
- Inhouse Technologies – Telecommunications
- Prevailing – Noise Impact Modelling
- Wetland Surveys Ireland – Terrestrial Ecology (Kerry Slug)

No significant difficulties arising from lack of information were encountered in the EIA process.

Availability

This EIS is available for complimentary download at www.grousemountwindfarm.ie.

Copies of this EIS including the Non-Technical Summary and the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report may be inspected free of charge or purchased by any member of the public during normal office hours at the following locations:

- An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.
- Kerry County Council Planning Department, Rathass, Tralee Cop. Kerry.
- Cork County Council, County Hall, Carrigrohane Road, Cork

1.4 CONSULTATION

1.4.1 Information Day

A public Information Day in connection with the proposal was held in Kilgarvan Community Centre, Kilgarvan on Tuesday 21st April 2015 between 3.00 pm and 7.30 pm.

The Information Day was organised to provide information about the development to the public and answer questions related to the project. The event was organised by ESB Wind Development Ltd., whose staff were on hand to explain the project and answer questions. A number of photomontages of the wind farm were on display, together with large maps showing the site and the proposed layout, to allow the members of the public identify their own residences in relation to the wind farm.

The event was advertised by placing Public Notices in *The Kerryman* (15th April 2015) and *Kerry's Eye* (16th April 2015) newspapers, both of which circulate in the area. In addition, Advertising Posters providing notice of the event were put on display on the (external) noticeboard at the Community Centre and in Kilgarvan Post Office.

Consultation with six elected members of Kerry County Council was undertaken prior to the Information Day by way of letter, telephone call or meeting, and a summary of proposals was issued to them and to three TDs.

Approximately 40 members of the public attended the Information Day. With the exception of two people, all attendees were highly supportive of wind energy generally and none were opposed to Grousemount Wind Farm. The former had concerns in connection with visual impacts on their home, which is located south of Kenmare, approximately 20 km from the site.

Visitors to the Information Open-Day were provided with a copy of an Information Leaflet regarding the proposed wind farm .

Copies of the Public Notices, Advertising Posters and Information Leaflet are presented in Appendix A in Volume 2 of 3 of the EIS.

1.4.2 Other Consultation

Other consultation was carried out as follows:

- A pre-planning meeting to discuss the broad outline of the project was held with Kerry County Council at its offices in October 2014.
- A pre-planning meeting to discuss the broad outline of the project was held with Cork County Council at its offices in May 2015.
- Consultation with operators of mobile communications network was undertaken to determine if the proposed project had potential for interference with networks.
- Consultation took place with the Irish Aviation Authority to determine the acceptability of the proposal and establish any requirements regarding air navigation safety.
- A pre-planning enquiry for the wind farm development was issued on 28th October 2014 to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAU project ref. no. G Pre004412/2014). A response on ecology has not been received.
- A pre-planning enquiry for the underground cable was issued to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. A response was received from the Department (DAU project ref. no. G Pre004417/2014) on 17th December 2014.

- Following on from the February 2015 sighting of the White-tailed Eagles at Grousemount, Dr Allan Mee, Project Manager of the Re-introduction Project, was contacted by Mr Joe Adamson (Biosphere Environmental Services).
- Details of the underground cable were discussed on site with Mr Michael McPartland, Environment and Fisheries Officer, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), and his Environment and Fisheries Officer colleague Ms Patricia O'Connor was contacted regarding fisheries in the Roughty catchment.
- Dr Dennis Doherty, Fisheries Biologist with the ESB was consulted regarding salmon movements past the dams at Carrigadrohid and Iniscarra and the ESB's restocking programme in the River Lee and its tributaries.
- Mr Tom Sweeney, Chairman of Macroom Anglers was contacted regarding trout angling on the Sullane River and its tributaries.
- As part of the enquiry to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, a reply pertaining to Archaeological Heritage was received from the DAU (Ref: G Pre00412/2014), dated 13th January 2015.
- The contents of the above reply were subsequently discussed with Ms. Mairead Weaver, Archaeologist, National Monuments Service on 22nd January 2015 in which the general methodology to be employed in preparing the cultural heritage assessment was discussed and agreed.
- Further correspondence from the DAU with respect to Underwater Archaeological Requirements was subsequently issued on 20th March 2015 (Ref: Pre00011/2015).

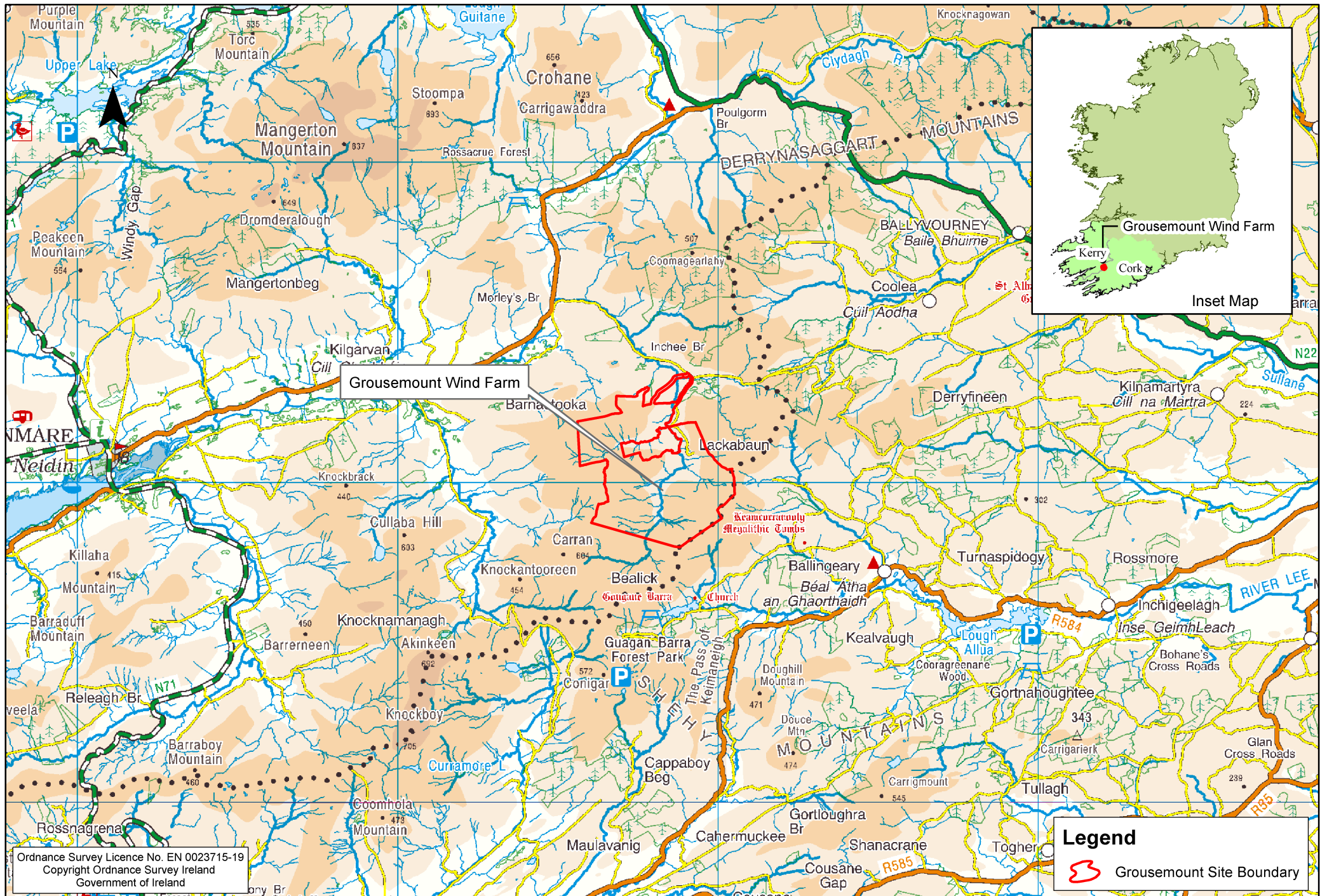



Figure 1.1 - Site Location Map

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Legend
 Grousemount Site Boundary