

Cullenagh Wind Farm

Community update for
planning on grid connection

SEPTEMBER 2021



COILLTE

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Cullenagh Wind Farm has been in development since 2011 and received planning consent in 2014 for 18 turbines. Coillte Renewable Energy is now preparing a planning application for the associated underground grid cable connection that will link the project to the ESB Networks substation at Portlaoise.

As we prepare the grid planning application in the coming months, we wish to keep all homeowners, stakeholders and communities located along the potential route and within the surrounds of the project up-to-date with developments. This newsletter provides information on further planned development activities and introduces our team, which includes a dedicated Community Liaison Officer who will be your day-to-day point of contact for all queries and feedback.

An urgent need for renewable energy

The climate change crisis is driving Ireland's need for resilience and security in our energy system. Building renewable energy projects and connecting them to our national grid is one way to do this. Recent reports released in summer 2021 from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Environmental Protection Agency provide a stark warning that climate disruption is inevitable, irreversible and will deeply affect us all.

At Coillte Renewable Energy, we want to play our part in helping Ireland generate at least 70% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and achieve a carbon neutral economy by 2050. Our aim is to develop renewable energy projects in a way that balances the needs of the local community with the need to transition towards a more sustainable world. Cullenagh Wind Farm has the potential to make a significant contribution towards local county, regional and national targets. The project also has the ability to make a significant contribution to the local economy in Laois via rates contributions, community benefit funds and enhanced recreational amenities.

CULLENAGH WIND FARM

The proposed wind farm at Cullenagh is being developed by Coillte's Renewable Energy Division. Further information is provided on the Renewable Energy team and the business in this newsletter. The site is located between Ballyroan and Timahoe and comprises three Coillte land holdings which are of similar size, with the more elevated northern and central land parcels at Cullenagh Mountain.

As planned, the wind farm will comprise 18 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 131.5m. It will have the potential to generate enough clean energy to power around 20,000 homes, saving 33,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per annum that would otherwise have been created by fossil fuels. In addition to the climate emergency and the need to reduce emissions, the electricity network is under increased stress to meet supply needs. Green energy projects such as Cullenagh Wind Farm have never been more important.

The proposed Cullenagh Wind Farm project has the potential to participate in the Government's Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) auction process. RESS acts as a policy support for the renewable energy industry and is helping the Government to meet its 2030 climate targets. Should Cullenagh Wind Farm be successful in a future auction process, a Community Benefit Fund will be established which includes funding for wider community initiatives and a near neighbour scheme.



Any such fund would deliver approximately €200,000 annually to community projects for the first 15 years of the wind farm's lifespan as part of the RESS Scheme. Coillte commits to delivering a further 10 years of funding of approximately €100,000 annually for the remaining lifetime of the project. This means the project will deliver an estimated overall Community Benefit Fund of €4,000,000 to the Ballyroan and Timahoe communities over its 25 years in operation.



AMENITY & RECREATION

Coillte Renewable Energy takes pride in providing quality amenity and recreation facilities on its wind farm developments. For an example of a popular and successful amenity see Sliabh Bawn Wind Farm (www.sliabhawnwindfarm.ie). We would like to explore with members of the local community if this would be of interest at Cullenagh Wind Farm and investigate the potential for a walking trail along with signage, waymarkers, a car park and picnic area. Please contact our local Community Liaison Officer (CLO) Tom Costello with your thoughts and comments.

THE GRID ROUTE

To ensure the power generated by the wind farm feeds into the national grid, a physical connection is required between the wind farm substation and the nearest ESB Networks substation, located in Portlaoise. The connection method involves a 38kV underground cable that primarily runs underneath the roadways for the majority of its 15km length, diverting from the road when there are technical merits to do so.

The planning application will incorporate an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and apply the requirements of the European Habitats Directive to determine the suitability of the route and inform its design.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

An essential part of the grid route design process involves engaging with the local community and communicating each step along the way.

In the event of a successful grant of planning permission for the grid connection, our consultants will work closely with Laois County Council to ensure compliance with any conditions of such planning, such that any disruption is kept to a minimum. A comprehensive traffic management plan would also be put in place, the details of which would be finalised and circulated well in advance of work commencing. Local access would be maintained at all times for residents and regular road users.

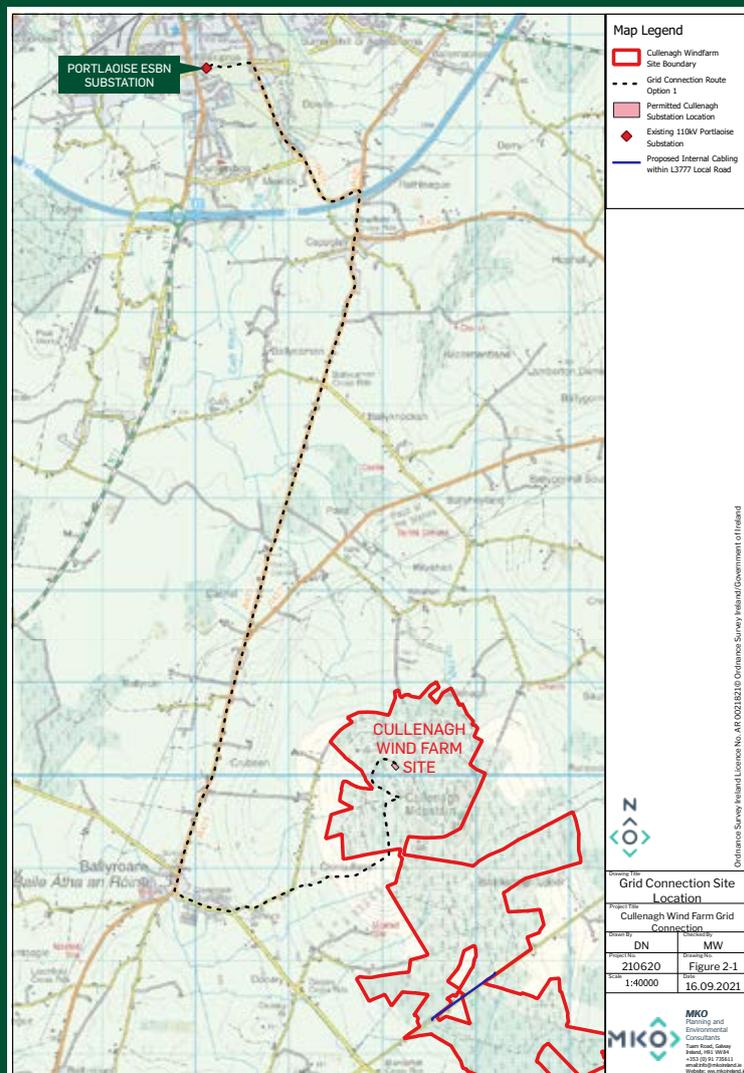


Figure 1: Planned Grid Connection.

CONNECTING TO THE GRID

The proposed underground cable for the wind farm is being designed and constructed to ESB Networks standards. It will be buried in a duct approximately 1.2 metres deep and 0.6 metres wide. The cable will be installed in a similar manner to existing utilities in the area, such as other cabling and water mains.

The underground cable will exit the Cullenagh Wind Farm Substation located beside one of the proposed turbines and travel to the ESB Networks substation adjacent to O'Moore Park GAA grounds, as per Figure 1. The latest cable route design now travels along the new road into the ESB Networks substation at Portlaoise. This is a change from prior designs.

NEXT STEPS

1. Sharing of up-to-date communications to relevant stakeholders, communities and landowners via brochures, website and CLO engagement.
2. Appointment of environmental and planning consultant MKO who will actively assess the grid route with our engineers over the coming months. MKO will prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) to determine the suitability and inform the design of the proposed grid route as part of the planning application process.
3. Liaison with Laois County Council and other statutory agencies on the scope of the proposed planning application, including traffic management etc.
4. Completion of final grid route design and a submission for planning approval made by the end of 2021.
5. Tendering initiation with our contract partners for the wind farm construction, installation and supply, with a targeted construction commencement in late 2022.



MEET THE TEAM

Tom Costello **Community Liaison Officer**

Tom has worked as a forest manager for Coillte for over 30 years and has recently been involved in community liaison work across the Coillte portfolio. He has extensive experience in the implementation of Community Benefit Funds, Near Neighbour Schemes and Energy Efficiency Schemes.

James Goldsmith **Project Manager**

James has worked in the energy sector for over 10 years and has vast experience in taking renewable energy projects from concept to completion.

Anne Walsh **Stakeholder Manager**

Anne has worked on both large and small-scale electricity generation projects for over 25 years and was involved in the successful community recreation project at Sliabh Bawn Wind Farm in Co. Roscommon.

Janine Thomas **Communications and Media Manager**

Janine worked as a journalist for various national newspapers for over 15 years before joining the Coillte team. She brings her extensive media and communications experience to this project.

MKO **Planning and Environmental Consultancy**

MKO is leading the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The company has a multi-disciplinary team of more than 100 professionals who cover every aspect of the environmental, technological and planning aspects of the grid connection.

Please note that the Coillte Renewable Energy division (**Coillte RE**) is in the very late stages of transitioning to a new stand-alone joint venture company, in conjunction with the ESB. Once established, this new joint venture company will be owned on a 50:50 basis by Coillte and ESB. The transaction has received an approval from Ireland's Competition Regulator and is now seeking its final shareholder approvals. Subject to receipt of such approvals, the business establishment is expected to take place in Q4 2021. Following the transition, there will be no change to the team identified above, although the business will operate under a new name, to be announced in due course.

CONTACT US

Your questions and feedback are important to us. We encourage you to contact our local CLO Tom Costello and arrange either an outdoor meeting or have a phone call to discuss the project. Please note that outdoor meetings must be pre-arranged and comply with Government Covid-19 guidelines and Coillte's Covid Protocol.

Contact us by email at:

cullenaghwindfarm@coillte.ie

or

call Tom Costello on:

087 352 5961

Keep up to date on developments at:

www.cullenaghwindfarm.ie

Our postal address:

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Dublin Road,
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Co. Wicklow,
A63 DN25.**

Note: Email or phone contact is preferable at this time as there is limited access to the Coillte office.

