

COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

The exact detail of the community benefit scheme is still to be determined, but it is important to us that the community is consulted on what the fund will look like, as well as being involved in the decision-making process. Typically, we would expect to hold consultation events to help shape how the fund will operate post planning grant of permission. However in the meantime there are some high-level principles regarding the fund which we will share in the next communication.

Given the current COVID-19 restrictions, future updates on the Community Benefit Fund will likely occur via additional information leaflets.

However, we expect to launch a project website shortly (www.gortyrhillywindfarm.ie) where regular updates on the project will be posted. In the meantime, please continue to contact our CLO in relation to any queries and we will notify you in due course when the website is live.



SOME ADVANTAGES OF WIND FARMS

What are the socio-economic benefits of wind farms in rural Ireland?

- An indirect benefit which is becoming very significant, is the contribution wind farms make towards cleaner air and the cutting of CO₂ gas going into the atmosphere.
- All renewable energy projects but most especially wind farms support Ireland's national policy and the Climate Action Plan.
- Wind farms make significant contribution to annual payments of rates to the local County Council, which goes towards your county infrastructure and services.
- Our wind farms offer improved recreation access through the open access forests. For example footfall to Coillte-owned forests in 2020 increased by nearly 40% during the pandemic as people embrace the outdoors amid public-health restrictions.
- Wind farms make direct payments to local landowners for access lands and / or rental, to facilitate the development.
- Wind farm developments lead to local infrastructure improvements and economic activities linked to construction.
- Wind farms provide a substantial community benefit fund to support sustainable development within the community.

CONTACT US

We welcome your comments and feedback on any aspect of this proposed project.

You can contact us by email at gortyrhillywindfarm@coillte.ie

or call our Community Liaison Officer, Brendan Twomey on 087 971 2151

or by post at this address:
Coillte Office, Hartnetts Cross,
Macroom, Co. Cork, P12 XA50*

*Note that email or phone contact is preferable at this time as there is limited access to the Coillte offices.

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Gortyrhilly Wind Farm

LEAFLET 2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our second leaflet on the Gortyrähilly wind farm project, provides an update to the community on the project, gives an overview of our expected timelines and provides responses to a number of similar questions received from the community.

Under normal circumstances members of our team would call door to door to meet you individually with this information leaflet. However, this is not possible at the moment, as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and requirements to adhere to evolving Government restrictions. We encourage you to take some time to read the contents and should you have any questions on any aspect of this material or simply want to discuss in more detail, please contact Brendan Twomey, your local Community Liaison Officer (CLO) whose contact details are on the back of this leaflet. He will be happy to return all calls and emails, answer your questions and if required, arrange a follow-up call with the project manager.

Since last September when the project was first introduced to the community, we have been asked various questions about the project. In order to respond to these, we have narrowed them into particular themes, such as noise, shadow flicker and visual.

HOW NOISY ARE WIND TURBINES?

As you may know from visiting a wind farm and standing up close to a wind turbine, the turbine blades make a swishing sound. However, as one moves farther away it becomes less and less audible. While some turbine models can be noisier than others and weather conditions affect the noise to a large extent, our design team will be selecting across the range of latest turbine models available to minimise this risk.

The wind farm will be designed to comply with the relevant noise guidelines as published by government and technical noise experts. Accordingly, our team will be taking every precaution to ensure that the location of turbines carefully considers all these aspects of potential noise while seeking to incorporate any mitigation measures as appropriate.

DO WIND TURBINES DAMAGE HEALTH?

In recent years both the World Health Organization (WHO) and our own government Department of Health have publicly stated there is no evidence to suggest wind turbines damage health.

In 2018, the WHO assessed the environmental noise guidelines for a range of noise sources including traffic, noise, aircraft, railways, leisure and activities and wind turbines. Their assessment found no evidence or 'low quality' evidence of any negative health impact in relation to turbines. However, they found clear evidence linking road traffic, railway and aircraft noise to impacting on health.

These findings confirm the conclusion of the Irish Department of Health which stated "There is no reliable consistent evidence that wind farms directly cause adverse health effects in humans". The Department of Health based this conclusion on research carried out by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council which itself updated its position in 2015 when it concluded "after careful consideration and deliberation of the body of evidence, NHMRC concludes that there is currently no consistent evidence that wind farms cause adverse health effects in humans". (Links to relevant references can be supplied upon request to the CLO).

WHAT IS SHADOW FLICKER?

Shadow flicker occurs at certain times of the day and year when the sun is very low in the sky, and where the movement of blades can periodically cast momentary shadow causing the light to appear to flicker. Current turbine technology allows for constant monitoring of the conditions which cause shadow flicker to occur and can therefore control the operation of the turbine to reduce any impact from shadow flicker.

WHAT ABOUT SETBACK DISTANCES?

From the outset, our goal is to keep as far back from residential properties as possible. The draft 2019 wind energy development guidelines cites "4 times the tip height of the turbines as a set-back, but, at all times a minimum distance of 500m". All of the Gortyrähilly turbines will be located at a minimum distance of 740m from residential houses in accordance with the draft 2019 guidelines.

We also consider the distance from many other features in our design process. At Gortyrähilly turbines will be located at a setback distance of:

- 65m from watercourses
- 2,700m from areas with environmental designation
- 100m from monuments

WHAT ABOUT VISUAL IMPACT?

Turbines can be easily seen on the landscape. As such, their placement needs to be considered from all views where they have an impact. The design is informed and led by an expert landscape architect. Once all the information is collected and a landscape and visual impact assessment has been completed, we will share these images with the community before submission of the planning application.

HOW WILL TOURISM BE AFFECTED?

Fáilte Ireland completed independent analysis supporting the fact that tourist visitor numbers in areas where windfarms are in operation are unaffected by the presence of wind farms. In fact, data gathered from Sliabh Bawn Wind Farm in Co. Roscommon proves the added benefits of a well-designed wind farm incorporating recreational facilities (www.sliabhawn.ie). Latest figures show that approximately 30,000 visitors used the recreation facilities in 2020 which were installed around the windfarm itself (eg. playground, walking trails, information boards and panoramic viewing point etc.).

As part of the Gortyrähilly project, our team will also investigate the potential for recreational amenities and would welcome your views on the matter.

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THE RED LIGHT ON TOP OF THE TURBINES?

The Irish Aviation Authority requires wind farm developers to install lights on wind turbines. This is for the safety of aircrafts and is a mandatory requirement.

PROGRESS AND STATUS

A lot of due diligence work has been done by the project team and the project consultants over the past few months. The following is a general update covering the ongoing work and estimated future timelines.

- Data collection and analysis continues based on the data collected eg site surveys, wind data.
- Field survey works are progressing well, however these have been impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions. The remaining surveys are likely to conclude in Q2 2021.

- The field surveys allow the environmental consultants to support the process of designing a layout which will determine the number of turbine locations and associated roads/crane pad locations. This is a lengthy process to ensure the locations are fully assessed, take account of all ecological sensitivities, determine the "developable area" and design the most aesthetically pleasing layout possible (see map illustrating developable area within the site boundary).
- By optimising the developable area and maintaining the commitment to a minimum set-back distance of 740m to a residential house, it is anticipated approximately 15 turbines can be sited within the boundary of Gortyrähilly. This is an additional 3 turbines from our original estimate as

communicated in the September 2020 leaflet and was achieved by maximising the use of space within the original footprint.

- The design process has still some way to go before the layout is finalised. This will be shared with the community in subsequent communications and well in advance of submitting for planning approval along with the completed Environmental Impact Assessment Report.
- Our current goal is to submit the project to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) for planning permission in Q3 2021. (Note that a windfarm with a total output greater than 50MWs is classed as a Strategic Infrastructure Development according to ABP rules and may seek permission directly from An Bord Pleanála rather than the local planning authority).

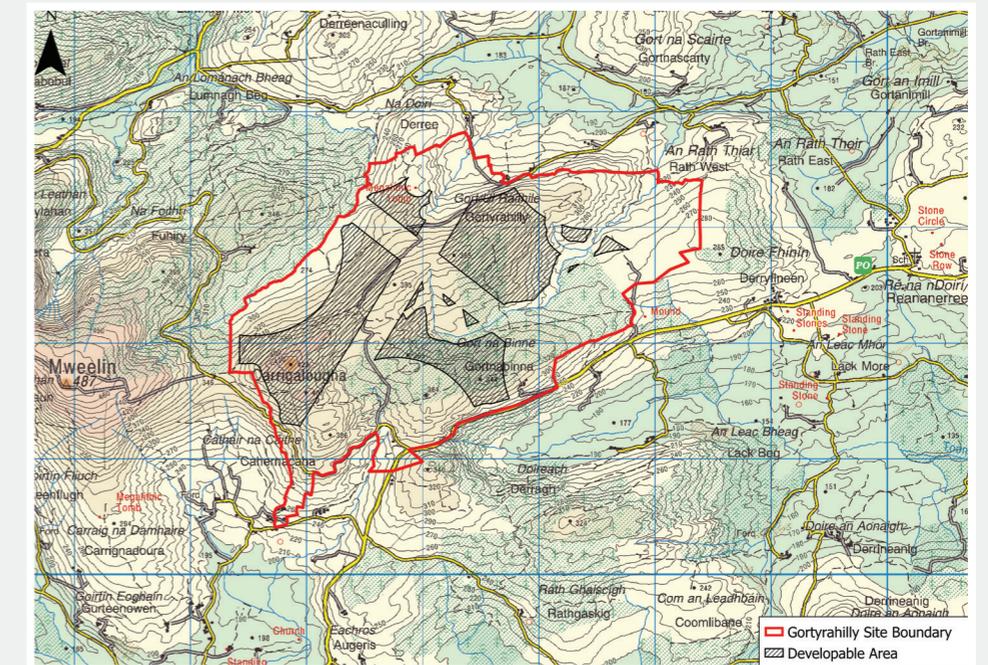


Figure 1: Gortyrähilly 'Developable Area' Map.