
Coole Area Wind Energy Development

Information Booklet

October 2017



■ Introduction

Element Power Ireland is one of a number of companies including Bord na Móna, SSE and the ESB involved in the development, construction and operation of renewable energy projects in various locations around the country. We believe that wind power has real potential for the future and an ambition of ours is to play a meaningful role in developing Ireland's existing renewable energy sector to allow the country to reach its goals in a sustainable way. We aim to engage with communities to develop renewable energy projects which will bring benefits not only to our country but also to the counties and communities around them.

■ Site Location Map



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■ Coole Wind Farm at a glance

- Electricity would be supplied to the Irish Electricity Grid System for use in Ireland
- It will comprise of up to 13 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 175m
- With an output of up to 50MW, this could power over 36,000 Irish homes
- There will be No Shadow Flicker at any house in the area
- We have worked to maximise the setback distance to dwelling houses
- All cabling will be placed underground
- There will be an onsite substation
- A local borrow pit will be used to source material – No blasting or explosives will be used on this project
- Associated works will include access tracks, turbine foundations and hardstanding areas, drainage works, temporary site compound, underground electrical and communications cables between turbines and an underground cable to connect the proposed project to the existing Mullingar 110kV substation
- Rates payments of up to €300,000 per annum will be payable to Westmeath County Council
- An inclusive Community Benefit package is being developed which will allow a wide range of individuals and organisations benefit from the proposed wind farm including an option for community investment & ownership
- There will be approximately 75 jobs created during the construction, operation and maintenance phases of the proposed project

■ Why Consider This Project?

Developing suitable and appropriate renewable energy projects is of fundamental importance to our country's future. Addressing our dependency on fossil fuels and moves towards becoming a low carbon economy are essential for protecting our energy supply and limiting the effects of climate change on our environment for the generations that follow us. We believe that an opportunity exists to develop a wind energy project which will work well in the Coole area and we have spoken to those in the local community in order to allow their feedback influence the ultimate form that this proposal will take.

"2016 was the hottest year on record setting a new high for the 3rd year in a row"

Climate Change and Global Warming

Climate change and global warming has the potential to have massive and permanent ramifications for our climate and way of life. Scientists agree that if action is taken now to limit the rate of increase in global temperatures the worst of the effects can still be avoided.

"Global warming has to be limited to below 2°C compared to the average temperature in pre-industrial times to prevent the most severe impacts of climate change and possibly catastrophic changes in the global environment"

– European Commission climate action

97% of Scientists now agree that Climate Change is directly as a result of human activity and more specifically the release of carbon from the burning of fossil fuels. Action on climate change is being taken at government level across the EU. **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** director general Laura Burke has stated "We are an island nation, vulnerable to climate change. We've a great deal to gain by becoming a leader in moving to a low-carbon economy." Hopefully this will happen!

Fossil Fuels and Energy Import Dependency

The world is heavily dependent on depleting fossil fuel reserves and the population of the world continues to grow. The way we as a people harness and use energy will be challenged in the coming years.

It is estimated that there will be an additional 1 million people living in the Republic of Ireland by 2050. That equates to an increase of over 20% in terms of people – all with a demand for electricity.

Ireland is one of the most fuel import dependent countries in the EU, importing approx. 88% of its fuel to meet its energy requirements in 2015.

This said, Ireland is committed to combating Climate Change by reducing carbon emissions and therefore reducing its dependence on Fossil Fuels. We have a legal obligation to diversify our energy sources by 2020 requiring the development of renewable energy to avoid substantial fines.

We have a world class wind resource which can help meet the required targets and generate economic and local benefits.

Harnessing wind energy is a very efficient and effective way of converting an abundant natural resource to electricity

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) have stated that in 2015 wind energy:

- Avoided €238 million in fossil fuel imports
- Reduced CO₂ emissions by 2.67 Mt

Studies have been carried out which confirm that the proposed wind farm would generate enough green electricity to displace the amount of carbon used during the construction of the wind farm within approximately 10 months of operation. After this, all electricity generated would displace carbon which otherwise would be released from burning fossil fuels.

■ Developing an appropriate project

From an early stage in the design process we have sought feedback from those living in the areas closest to the proposed wind farm. We have endeavoured to address concerns expressed and allowed the views of local people to influence the final design.

Whilst we are aware that we may not be able to fully satisfy everyone, we will continue to work to design and develop a project which reflects what people are telling us would work best in this area.

During our meetings with people we asked them to consider how they thought that a wind farm could work best in the area and how the maximum benefit could be brought to the local area should it be granted planning permission. Taking this feedback on board we made significant changes to the design proposed.

Changes made include:

- A reduction in turbine numbers which saw the 25 initially proposed reduced to 13 turbines
- A commitment to eliminate Shadow Flicker at all homes
- An increase in the initially proposed setback distance
- The elimination of blasting or any use of explosives during construction
- Consideration of local views in terms of site access and the roads to be used including a commitment that no traffic will be allowed to use the road in front of Coole National School
- The development of a community benefit scheme which was guided by the views of people in the area
- The development of a Local Business Support Scheme.

■ Consultation

Common Issues raised

Noise and Proximity

In designing this project we have worked to increase the setback distances from houses to 700m and over. It cannot be said that there is no noise from wind turbines however we would encourage anyone who has an interest or concern about noise to visit a wind farm and to talk to the people who live there. There are no noise issues with properly developed and operated wind farms such as those we are involved with.

Shadow Flicker

We have committed to **Zero Shadow Flicker** at all homes in the area eliminating this as an issue.

Blasting and material extraction

Blasting will not be carried out on this project. In order to minimize traffic on the local roads we have committed to sourcing the material required for construction from local sources where possible. We have identified an area of suitable material which is approximately 1.5km from the proposed wind farm in the townland of Mullagh. While talking to people in the local area we were advised that blasting would not be viewed as an appropriate extraction method. In light of this we can confirm that no explosives will be used on this project.

Wind farms in the rural landscape

In terms of assessing the appropriateness of turbines in any landscape, the height and scale of the turbines being proposed and the nature of the landscape in question require serious consideration. Guidance contained within the wind energy guidelines states that taller turbines are more suited to flat bog land type landscapes such as the area being considered in Coole. This is partly because these types of landscapes are normally broad, open and considered to be able to accommodate higher tip heights but also due to the fact that hedgerows, trees and other visual obstructions provide effective screening of the turbines. This is not to say that turbines will not be seen anywhere however it is true to say that the wind farm will work well in the local landscape.

■ What will this bring to the area?

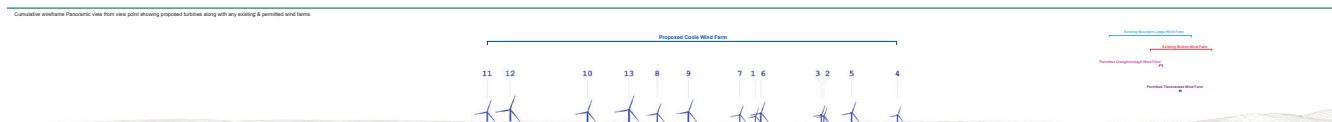
We are aiming to develop a project which will not only bring the environmental benefits of generating green electricity but will also bring real and tangible benefits to the local area. Through talking to people in the local area, we have developed a community benefit proposal (based on the current proposal being granted planning) which includes the following:

- **Community Ownership** - Local people will be able to invest in the project and get a return from the wind farm
- **A Community Benefit Fund** of up to €1.2m will be available for the local communities
- **Environmental and Economic Sustainability Scheme** [For those closest to the wind farm]
 - Household Dividend
 - A Greener Homes Scheme
- **Jobs** – Local businesses will be assisted in seeking to secure valuable contracts during construction and operation
- **Rates in the region of €300,000/year** - A number of Local Authorities are now seeking to increase their funding through raising the Local Property Tax. In terms of Westmeath, the rates payable from this wind farm could offset a Local Property Tax increase of approximately 5% for each household in the county!
- **Local road improvements** - Upgrades will be carried out to local roads which would be used during construction.

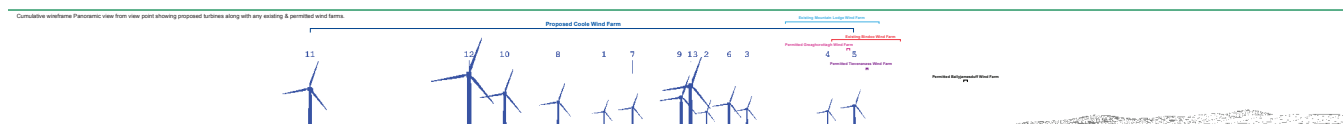
All too often opportunities for community development can be missed. This project offers an opportunity to bring real and tangible benefits to the area. If you have ideas on how the community benefit fund could be best used please contact us and let us know.

What would this project look like from the villages?

Coole Village – Photo location 3.0km to wind farm



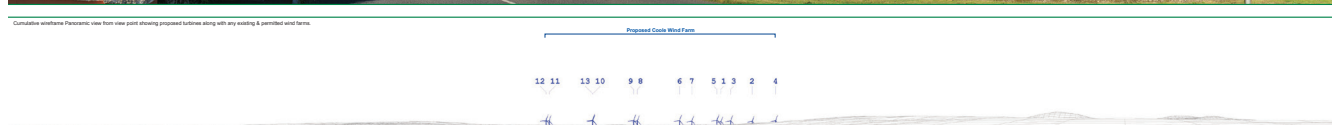
Coole – R396 1.3km to wind farm



Finea view – 3.8km to the wind farm



Castlepollard view – 7.2km to the wind farm



Note – We will be making these and other photomontages available on our website so that they can be viewed at a larger resolution. Please visit www.coolewindfarm.ie for further information

■ Where can I find out more about this project?

- You can contact us on our email contact details below and we will have our Community Liaison Officer call you back to provide you with accurate information and deal with any query you may have
- Visit our Website – **www.coolewindfarm.ie**
- Call our office in Tullamore to arrange to meet with one of our team
- You will be able to view the full planning files in the Westmeath County Council buildings after the planning application has been submitted

■ When is this project likely to be submitted for planning?

An application was lodged for this project to Westmeath County Council in June of 2017. We were subsequently advised of an issue in the processing of the application. In light of this and in the interests of full and proper consultation we are preparing to resubmit the application to the local authority for consideration. It is our intention to do so during October 2017. We would hope that this project will be looked on favourably within the planning system and that it will be deemed to be a suitable and appropriate project which can bring much local benefit as well as helping us towards becoming a low carbon economy and achieving our renewable energy targets.

“Climate change is a fundamental problem that we must solve and not merely pass on to the generations to come. We can’t let our children and grandchildren look back on this critical period in time and say that we failed them.” - Mary Robinson

■ Information / Misinformation

Information is available from many sources in relation to wind energy however much of this can be inaccurate and misleading. Unfortunately there is also much information put into the public domain aimed at misrepresenting individual projects. This being the case, it is important to make sure that the images or information that you have to hand are accurate. We are happy to provide accurate information on this project or guidance to help direct you towards sources of genuine peer reviewed information should you request it.



www.hackettdigital.ie

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