



APPENDIX 14-2

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

1.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As part of the LVIA conducted in Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual of this EIAR, this appendix comprises the comprehensive impact assessment addressing the landscape effects of the Proposed Wind Farm upon designated LCAs scoped in for assessment of this EIAR (See Section 14.4.3.3 of Chapter 14). As discussed in Chapter 14, the Clare County Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the CCDP) has identified Landscape Character Areas and their 'Overall Sensitivity to Wind Farm Developments' in Table 4a of Volume 6: Clare Wind Energy Strategy.

The impact assessment for each LCA is set out in individual tables below. In the tables, the discussion of theoretical visibility in each LCA refers to Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping as outlined in the LVIA Chapter 14, Section 14.3 Visibility of the Proposed Project. It is recommended that the impact assessments in this appendix are read in conjunction with Figure 14-13: Landscape Character Areas with ZTV.

The above map illustrates the boundary of each LCA and shows the ZTV extending to 15km from the proposed turbines, marking the LCA Study Area for the assessment of effects on designated LCAs; the brief and full methodologies for determining the LCA Study Area boundary are provided respectively in Section 14.2.2 Scope and Definition of LVIA Study Area in Chapter 14 and in Section 1.4 of the same name in Appendix 14-1.

The classification definitions of the different ratings for the significance of effects are taken from the '*Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*' published by the Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland (EPA)(2022); refer to *Appendix 14-1*, Section 1.7.5 Landscape Effects Assessment Matrix.

LCA 17: Slieve Callan Uplands

LCA 17 – Slieve Callan Uplands	
<p>Distance from the Site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA</p>	<p>6 no. of the 8 no. proposed turbines are located within this LCA. The proposed turbines are located in the southwest of this LCA, where the LCA extends a further 17km to the north and 18km to the east, beyond the LCA Study Area.</p>
<p>LCA Key Characteristics</p> <p><i>(As reported in the LCACC, which forms part of the CCDP 2023-2029)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › <i>“Land rises to moorland hills of Sliabh Callan and Ben Dash.</i> › <i>Mix of pasture, silage and coniferous habitats.</i> › <i>Very little settlement, concentrated along communication routes and in outer parts of the area.</i> › <i>Areas become increasingly rural as one travels eastwards, away from the coast.</i> › <i>Communications is aligned along valleys.</i> › <i>Uplands very exposed, valleys contained but unenclosed. Long views south from Ben Dash towards Shannon Estuary”.</i>
<p>Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development</p>	<p>All proposed turbines are located within an area designated as ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development within this LCA. Large portions of the wider LCA designated are also designated as either ‘Strategic Area’ or ‘Acceptable in Principle’ for wind energy development. Notably, this LCA accommodates the majority of the ‘Strategic Areas’ designated for wind energy development in West Clare under the Clare Wind Energy Strategy.</p> <p>Table 4a of Volume 6 of the CCDP, which provides the strategic guidance on landscape capacity for wind energy developments within LCAs, identifies Sliabh Callan LCA has an overall “<i>Medium to Low</i>” sensitivity to wind energy development. It further states that it is capable to accommodate “<i>a number of large or medium wind farms subject to careful siting to avoid significant impacts on skylines</i>”.</p> <p>The proposed turbines are located within an area designated as ‘settled landscapes’ in the CCDP, in which it is an objective of the CCDP to “<i>permit development in areas designated as ‘settled landscapes’ to sustain and enhance quality of life</i>”.</p> <p>Therefore, on balance, the sensitivity of this LCA to wind energy development is deemed to be Low.</p>
<p>Visibility of the Proposed Wind Farm within LCA</p>	<p>There is primarily full theoretical visibility within 5km of the proposed turbines, with pockets of partial to no theoretical visibility due to topographical undulations and landform variations. Beyond 5km, theoretical visibility becomes more limited, with larger stretches of no theoretical visibility within 10km due to visual screening from topographical features such as Slieve Callan and Ben Dash. Beyond 10km there is primarily no theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines in this LCA.</p> <p>Overall, the proposed turbines are not excessively visible within this LCA, and where they are, the strategic alignment of the turbines with the natural landform, combined with topographical screening, ensures that the turbines assimilate well within the undulating landscape.</p>

	<p>Photomontage Viewpoints VP05, VP07, VP08, VP13, and VP14 are located within this LCA.</p>
<p>Cumulative Baseline</p>	<p>The existing Cahermurphy Wind Farm, existing Slieve Callan Wind Farm, existing Letteragh Wind Farm, existing Boolynagleragh Wind Farm, existing Boolynagleragh Extension Wind Farm, existing Glenmore Wind Farm, existing Booltiagh Wind Farm, existing Booltiagh Extension Wind Farm and existing Kiltumper Wind Farm are located within this LCA. Other existing wind farms in adjacent LCAs are also visible in parts of this LCA.</p> <p>The proposed Slieveacurry Wind Farm and the proposed Illaunbaun Wind Farm are also located within this LCA, sited in the north of this LCA.</p>
<p>Cumulative Landscape Effects</p>	<p>Overall, as illustrated by the Cumulative Comparative Map with Comparative ZTV (Figure 14-16 of Chapter 14), the majority of areas within 5 km of the proposed turbines have theoretical visibility of both the proposed turbines and the cumulative turbines. Up to 10km from the Proposed Wind Farm, there are patches with only theoretical visibility of the cumulative turbines within this LCA. Beyond 10km, theoretical visibility is predominantly limited to the cumulative turbines only.</p> <p>Given the existing density of wind energy development within this LCA, some degree of cumulative landscape effect is anticipated from the addition of the Proposed Wind Farm. However, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV indicates that the proposed turbines introduce little to no new areas from which wind energy would become visible for the first time. Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Change</p>	<p>Magnitude = Moderate</p> <p>Rationale: While the proposed turbines will alter the physical fabric of the landscape within this LCA, the changes to the landscape features within this LCA will be mostly localised to a small portion of the LCA within a modified landscape comprised primarily of agriculture and commercial forestry, leaving the wider extent of the LCA unaffected. In terms of visibility, theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines, is largely confined to areas within 10 km of the Proposed Wind Farm site and to elevated vantage points in the wider landscape.</p>
<p>Significance of Effect</p>	<p>Low x Moderate = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Assessment Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
<p>Mitigating Factors</p>	<p>Mitigating factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The proposed turbines are located in a landscape designated as a ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development, an area of the landscape envisioned for wind energy development in local planning policy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Given that the proposed turbines are located within the same location as the existing Cahermurphy Wind Farm, the proposed turbines within this LCA are sited within a landscape where wind energy has already been established. › The Proposed Wind Farm is located within a ‘Settled Landscape’ as designated by the CCDP, which is not considered to be a high value landscape. › As stated from above in the ‘LCA Key Characteristics’, the high-quality views from Ben Dash are to the south towards the Shannon Estuary in the opposing direction to the proposed turbines. › The primary landforms of this LCA comprises of elevated ridges of mountain moorland, which are landscape units with a strong capacity for absorbing winds energy developments of this scale. › Siting and design were developed in accordance with the WEDGs (2006) for Transitional Marginal Land landscape character types. › Cumulatively, there are very few locations where the proposed turbines introduce turbine developments as entirely new or novel elements within the landscape. › The proposed turbines will only materially alter a very localised portion of LCA 17.
<p>Residual Effect</p>	<p>Slight (EPA 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i></p>

LCA 20: Malbay Coastal Farmlands

LCA 20 – Malbay Coastal Farmlands	
Distance from the Site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	2 no. of the 8 no. proposed turbines are located within this LCA. The proposed turbines are located in the southeast of this LCA, where the LCA extends a further 15.1km to the north and 11.4km to the southeast.
LCA Key Characteristics <i>(As reported in the LCACC, which forms part of the CCDP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › <i>“Gently undulating pastoral farmland.</i> › <i>Indented coastline, with some wide sandy bays.</i> › <i>Strong Atlantic influence through the open and windswept character, reinforced by minimal tree cover and hedgerows.</i> › <i>Views to Sliabh Callan, often framed by shallow valleys and along the coastline.</i> › <i>Scattered but frequent settlement. Often individual houses but several small villages and larger settlements including Spanish Point and Milltown Malbay”.</i>
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>The coastal region, to the west of this LCA, is of high value, designated as a ‘Heritage Landscape’, described in the CCDP as <i>“areas where natural and cultural heritage are given priority and where development is not precluded but happens more slowly and carefully”</i>. This coastal area is a highly sensitive landscape receptor, primarily pertaining to its coastline and its immediate coastal area, and is designated as ‘Not Normally Permissible’ for wind energy development.</p> <p>The inland portion of this LCA, which comprises the majority of its extent, and within which the proposed turbines are located in, is designated as a ‘Settled Landscape’. This inland area of the LCA is of relatively low sensitivity compared to the coastland due to its degraded nature and strong human influence. Within this inland context, the proposed turbines are located in areas designated as ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development under Volume 6: Clare Wind Energy Strategy.</p> <p>Considering the LCA in its entirety, on balance, the sensitivity of this LCA to wind energy development is deemed to be High.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Wind Farm within the LCA	<p>There is predominantly full theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines within this LCA due to its relatively low-lying nature, with pockets of no visibility.</p> <p>Photomontage Viewpoints VP01, VP04, VP09, VP10, VP11, and VP15 are located within this LCA.</p>
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Effects	Overall, as illustrated by the Cumulative Comparative Map with Comparative ZTV (Figure 14-16 of Chapter 14), the majority of this LCA within 10 km of the proposed turbines have theoretical visibility of both the proposed turbines and the cumulative turbines. There are some areas where only theoretical visibility of cumulative turbines only occur north to northwest of the proposed turbines, and along the coastline. Beyond 10km to the north, there are more areas where cumulative visibility theoretical

	<p>visibility is predominantly limited to the cumulative turbines only or no theoretical visibility.</p> <p>The Proposed Wind Farm will add to the overall number of turbines visible from the LCA. Similar to other proposed projects in the adjacent LCAs; therefore, the Proposed Wind Farm will bring the presence of wind energy developments in closer proximity to the coastline of this LCA.</p>
<p>Magnitude of Change</p>	<p>Magnitude = Slight</p> <p>Rationale: While the proposed turbines will alter the physical fabric of the landscape within this LCA where the 2 no. turbines are to be located, the changes to the landscape features within this LCA will be very localised to a very small portion of the LCA within a modified landscape comprised primarily of agriculture, leaving the wider extent of the LCA, including the key sensitive features of this LCA (i.e. the coastline) unaffected.</p>
<p>Significance of Effect</p>	<p>High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends”.</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
<p>Mitigation Factors</p>	<p>Mitigating factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The high sensitivity landscape receptor - ‘Heritage Landscapes’ is located along the coast, visually and physically set back from the proposed turbines 5.15km at its closest point. The proposed turbines will not alter the physical fabric of this Heritage Landscape. › The scenic views from the coastline are primarily directed westward towards the open ocean and wider coastal horizon, in the opposing direction to the proposed turbines (see VP09, where the proposed turbines are visible as distant features in the background of the landscape and in the opposite direction of the coastline) › The proposed turbines are located in a landscape designated as a ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development, an area of the landscape envisioned for wind energy development in local planning policy. › Given that the proposed turbines are located within the same location as the existing Cahermurphy Wind Farm, the proposed turbines within this LCA are sited within a landscape where wind energy has already been established. › Siting and design were developed in accordance with the WEDGs (2006) for Transitional Marginal Land landscape character types. › Due to forestry, roadside vegetation and localised undulations in topography, actual visibility will be significantly reduced in comparison to the theoretical visibility indicated on ZTV mapping.
<p>Residual Effect</p>	<p>Slight (EPA 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities”</i></p>

LCA 19 Kilmihil Farmlands

LCA 19 – Kilmihil Farmlands	
Distance from the Site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located 624m south of the nearest proposed turbine (T08). There are no proposed turbines are located within this LCA.
LCA Key Characteristics <i>(As reported in the LCACC, which forms part of the CCDP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › “Undulating to rolling hills, medium-high elevation. Some drumlin-type landforms but these do not dominate. › Complex mix of moorland and farmland. › Occasional flatter areas within hills, such as Creegh River Valley › Scattered settlement across the area with Kilmihil, Creegh and Curraclare the only villages. › Kilmihil town is a designated ACA”.
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>The majority of this LCA is designated as a ‘Settled Landscape’, which is of relatively low landscape sensitivity. There are large areas within this LCA which are classified as being ‘Acceptable In Principle’ for wind energy development.</p> <p>Overall, on balance, the sensitivity of this LCA to wind farm development is deemed to be Low.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Wind Farm within the LCA	<p>There is primarily full theoretical visibility within 5km of the proposed turbines. Beyond 5km, the rolling, undulating nature of this LCA creates large patches of no visibility.</p> <p>Photomontage Viewpoints VP02, VP03, and VP12 are located within this LCA.</p>
Cumulative Baseline	<p>The existing Crossmore Wind Farm is located approximately 8.5km southeast of the nearest proposed turbine T8. This existing wind farm is located in the south of the LCA.</p> <p>There are 4 no. turbines of the proposed Cloonkett Wind Farm to be sited within the southeast corner of this LCA, approximately 13.1 km southeast from the nearest proposed turbine T8. The proposed Ballykett Wind Farm is to be sited in the southwest corner of this LCA, approximately 12km southwest of the nearest proposed turbine.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>Overall, as illustrated by the Cumulative Comparative Map with Comparative ZTV (Figure 14-16 of Chapter 14), there is mainly theoretical visibility of both the Proposed Wind Farm and cumulative wind turbines within 5km of the proposed turbines. Beyond 5km, there are a greater no. of areas where cumulative visibility theoretical visibility indicated is predominantly limited to the cumulative turbines only.</p> <p>The Proposed Wind Farm will add to the overall number of turbines visible from the LCA. Given the existing density of wind energy development within and adjacent to this LCA, some degree of cumulative landscape effect is anticipated from the addition of the Proposed Wind Farm.</p>

	<p>However, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV indicates that the proposed turbines introduce very few new areas from which wind energy would become visible for the first time. Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>Magnitude = Slight</p> <p>Rationale: The proposed turbines will not alter the physical fabric of this LCA. In terms of visibility, where visibility does occur, the proposed turbines are seen set-back within an upland landscape, where wind energy has already been established.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Low x Slight = Minor/Negligible = Not Significant (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Mitigation Factors	<p>Mitigating factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The proposed turbines are not located in this LCA and will therefore, not materially alter the physical fabric of this LCA; › Given the undulating topography of the landscape, visibility will be limited to elevated vantage points with limited visual screening within the landscape; › Visibility will be highest within 5km of the proposed turbines, where the undulating landscape beyond creates areas where visibility is limited to cumulative turbines only.
Residual Effect	<p>Not Significant (EPA 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p>

LCA 21: Loop Head Peninsula

LCA 21 – Loop Head Peninsula	
Distance from the Site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located 8km southwest of the nearest proposed turbine (T5). The furthestmost point of this LCA to the proposed turbines is approximately 44.9km southwest, beyond the LCA Study Area and LVIA Study Area. There are no proposed turbines are located within this LCA.
LCA Key Characteristics <i>(As reported in the LCACC, which forms part of the CCDP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › <i>“Flat peninsular farmland – very distinctive ladder fields, estuaries, salt marsh and mudflats, sand and boulder coves, shelving coastal rocks, vertical cliffs.</i> › <i>Coast becomes increasingly dramatic towards Loop Head with high cliffs, arches, stacks and rocky inlets. More sheltered bays are typically on the southern side of the peninsula.</i> › <i>The presence of the sea is always apparent, and the character of the land reflects the mood of the weather and the storminess of the seas.</i> › <i>The area is remote and feels remote and detached, with peaceful rural unspoilt qualities.</i> › <i>Settlement is more concentrated along the southern peninsula, increasing again towards Kilkee.</i> › <i>Kilkee is a designated ACA (Architectural Area)”.</i>
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>High</p> <p>The coastal region of this LCA is of high value, designated as a ‘Heritage Landscape’, described in the CCDP as “areas where natural and cultural heritage are given priority and where development is not precluded but happens more slowly and carefully”. This coastal area is a highly sensitive landscape receptor, primarily pertaining to its coastline and its immediate coastal area, and is designated as ‘Not Normally Permissible’ for wind energy development.</p> <p>In the southwest portion of this LCA comprising the peninsula, Heritage Landscape has been designated around the coastal edges, while ‘Settled Landscape’ is designated in the land area between the coastal regions. The CWES has designated this portion of land, comprising both ‘Heritage’ and ‘Settled’ landscape on the peninsula, as ‘Not Normally Permissible’, considering the regions of ‘Heritage Landscape’ along the east and west of this peninsula, and the number of scenic routes that go through it.</p> <p>However, the northeast inland portion of this LCA (which falls within the LCA Study Area), also designated as ‘Settled Landscape’, is zoned as ‘Open to Consideration’ to wind energy development. There is smaller areas of land zoned as ‘Acceptable in Principle’ for wind energy development under Volume 6: the Clare Wind Energy Strategy. This inland area of the LCA is of relatively low sensitivity compared to the coastland and peninsula area due to its degraded nature and strong human influence.</p> <p>Considering the LCA in its entirety, on balance, the sensitivity of this LCA to wind energy development is deemed to be High.</p>

Visibility within LCA	In the portion of the LCA that is within the 15km LCA study area, there is primarily full theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines. There are open, long ranging views from within this LCA towards the proposed turbines including from sensitive receptors such as designated scenic route 33 and the N67 national road
Cumulative Baseline	There are two existing wind farms within this LCA, Tullabrack Wind Farm and Moanmore Wind Farm. The proposed Moanmore Lower Wind Farm is to be sited further south of these existing wind farms. Other wind farms in adjacent LCAs are also visible in parts of this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>Overall, as illustrated by the Cumulative Comparative Map with Comparative ZTV (Figure 14-16 of Chapter 14), there is predominantly theoretical visibility of both the proposed turbines and the cumulative turbines within this LCA. There are some areas where only theoretical visibility of cumulative turbines occurs along coastal regions.</p> <p>The Proposed Wind Farm will add to the overall number of turbines visible from the LCA but will not change the characteristics identified above as a result of the number of turbines already in existence and proposed. Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>Slight.</p> <p>This LCA is setback from the proposed turbines by approximately 8km. there will be no alterations to the physical makeup of this LCA. The landscape character of this LCA will remain the same as the baselines. The proposed turbines will not alter the key characteristics of the LCA such as the heritage landscape and the coastline.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA 2022) <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i></p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The landscape receptors of high sensitivity are located at the coast where visual amenity value is afforded by the coastline, scenic landscape views are focussed north or south along the coast or westerly in an offshore direction. › Views inland towards the Proposed Wind Farm, are not of high amenity value and are of a landscape designated for wind energy development by Clare County Council. › This LCA extends beyond 25km from the nearest proposed turbines, where potential landscape effects are minimal as a result of the Proposed Wind Farm. › There are existing wind farms within this LCA, where the Proposed Wind Farm are well set-back and would not introduce novel elements.
Residual Effect	<p>Not Significant (EPA 2022) <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p>



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**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA
(LCA) IMPACT ASSESSMENT**