

# Appendix 2.4

# **Community Consultation**

## **Coolglass Wind Farm EIAR Volume 3**

**Coolglass Wind Farm Limited** 

SLR Project No.: 501.V00727.00006

27 June 2023





# Coolglass Wind Farm

Project Booklet

Q1 2023

# **Coolglass Wind Farm**



#### Introduction

The cost of energy and the cost of living have recently become the biggest topics of discussion in most households across the country.

Statkraft, along with our partners on this project, FuturEnergy Ireland (FEI), is committed to delivering affordable renewable energy onto our grid system and working with communities to explore how these projects might work best in the local areas. We are also committed to delivering local funds to assist people and communities in a real and tangible way, making lives easier, better, and more sustainable.

Recent global events have challenged us to ask ourselves if it makes sense to pay for much of our energy to come from overseas. The relevance of this question is all the greater when we have ample sources of clean energy here at home.

As a generation, we have a unique opportunity to make a real difference in securing our own energy independence. Positive engagement and feedback on this proposal, whilst design is ongoing, will ensure that all possible opportunities can be captured and ultimately delivered, should the project come to fruition.

There is a lot of pride in the heritage of these local areas and a long local history. We believe that it will be possible to merge today's opportunities, with all that we have from our past. Furthermore, we believe that we can deliver for the present, whilst safeguarding our future.

We are not here just to provide information – we would like you to let us know how you think this proposal could work best, and deliver most benefits, for your area.

#### Who we are

Statkraft and FuturEnergy have come together to bring the proposed Coolglass Wind Farm forward for consideration.

Statkraft is involved in the development and operation of a wide mix of renewable solutions in Ireland including onshore wind, solar, offshore wind and grid services and is currently delivering a significant amount of renewable energy onto the Irish grid system.

FuturEnergy was formed as a partnership between Coillte and the ESB, in November 2021. FuturEnergy's aim is to combine the nation's strongest assets and expertise in renewable energy development, and its mission is to maximise the potential of our unique wind and land resources and accelerate Ireland's transformation to a low carbon energy economy.

This proposal will be developed under Coolglass Wind Farm Ltd. which is a partnership between Statkraft and FuturEnergy, aimed at delivering the best results possible.

#### The need for the project

The impacts of climate change on our world are indisputable. We are all being challenged to consider the role we play in climate action and reducing our reliance on costly and polluting imported fossil fuels. The world is getting warmer and extreme weather events are a frequent occurrence. We cannot stop climate change, but we can take action to address it. Renewable energy development is a vital part of that action.

Furthermore, energy security in Ireland has come into sharp focus. It can only be achieved from the country investing in renewable energy, allowing us to achieve a cleaner environment, more affordable prices, and real energy independence in this country. With abundant natural resources, Ireland can be a world leader when it comes to renewable energy integration and is on the right path to decarbonising our energy system.

The communities in the area around the proposed Coolglass Wind Farm, such as Timahoe, Wolfhill, Swan and Fossy Mountain have an opportunity to consider this renewable energy project and how, if granted planning permission, this proposal could make a real difference to the local area.



From initial discussions with people in the local area, we have come to develop an initial understanding of the vision that the local community has for the local area, and we appreciate how important heritage and tourism is to the area. There is clearly a very strong voluntary ethos in the community, and people work very hard to ensure that it is an interesting place to visit with plenty of public amenities on offer.

As well as that, feedback around job creation and investment in energy efficiency schemes for local houses was central to our discussions.

This area has a long history in energy, with the Wolfhill Coal Mine being part of the landscape for many years. Now is the time for renewable energy to provide the local community with future opportunities for investment and development.

> However, we are very interested in what the community's views are in relation to how a project such as this could work best and deliver benefit the local area.

#### Differing opinions

We are aware that people have different opinions on the development of renewable energy projects however, given the importance of the energy issues that as a country we are grappling with, and what this project has the potential to deliver locally, we believe that it is critically important that everyone, has space to develop and hold their own position based on the merits of this proposal.

Our intention is to provide factual information on what is being considered, and to seek feedback on two separate things, firstly how the design could be worked best to deliver a suitable and appropriate project that would work well in the local area and secondly, to seek feedback on how the community benefit fund that will be associated with this project could deliver a meaningful positive effect on the daily lives of people in the local area and deliver real sustainability.

People's thoughts on how wind turbines look invariably range from those who like wind turbines and see them as a beacon of hope for the future, to those who simply don't like how they look. People who don't like the visual aspect, will raise this as a concern. On the other side, people who like the look of wind turbines, recognise what they have to offer in terms of delivering local sustainability and national energy security. Our transition to a low carbon society will inevitably bring visual changes to our landscape. The perception of this development in terms of how it would look, in the context of what it can deliver both locally and nationally, is ultimately a very personal matter.

#### At a Glance

- 13 turbine project
- Distance to nearest turbine over 700m
- Capacity to provide clean energy to 60,000
  homes
- Over 80MW of renewable energy to the Irish electricity grid
- Zero shadow flicker policy
- Height of turbine up to a maximum of 180M
- Total Community Benefit Fund of circa €7 million, depending on the final design
- Associated works will include access tracks, met mast, turbine foundations and hardstanding areas, drainage works, temporary site compound, grid systems services, substation, underground electrical and communications cables between turbines and an underground cable to connect the proposed project to a local substation.
- All cables underground



#### This project proposal

With this proposal, there is the potential to develop a 13-turbine wind farm, in two clusters, located near the villages of Timahoe, Wolfhill and The Swan. Much of the site is located in an area of Coillte woodland and in an area of high wind. The current proposed turbine tip height is 180m. We believe that this proposal has the capacity to not only deliver climate action, but also to bring very real benefits to local people and the local area.

The location under consideration was initially identified following a review of areas that could allow for the development of this type. All wind energy proposals with an output of over 50MW are deemed by planning to be strategic projects given what they potentially have to offer. Submission directly to An Bord Pleanála as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application is therefore a planning requirement for this proposal. Laois County Council will be expected to review and actively input on any submission.

It is important to Statkraft and our partner FEI that our projects are considered in terms of the climate challenges being addressed, and that they are appropriate for the area, work well where they are located and are delivered as part of a just transition. They will also bring real benefits to local people and support the economic, social and environmental sustainability of those local areas.

Local appropriateness is a fundamental consideration, so community feedback on the design proposal is very welcome.

#### How this project has evolved over time

At the initial stages of consideration, designers drafted a project outline that would maximise the wind energy potential of the site. Staying in line with the guidelines, the following initial assumptions were made: The initial distances to houses was taken at 500m (subsequently increased), shadow flicker curtailment was taken at the maximum allowable levels, the turbine height was taken at 169m.

Once this concept layout had been established, the design team took into consideration increased distances from homes in the area. It was found that increasing the setback distance from 500m to 680m reduced the number of turbines that could be considered by 50%, reducing the number to 19.

Placing local appropriateness as a fundamental consideration, further optimisation of this design was carried out in terms of factors including commonly received community feedback during which, distance to houses, number of turbines, shadow flicker and noise were considered. It was found that it was possible to increase the distances to houses, reduce turbine numbers further and improve general performance levels of the proposed wind farm by increasing the tip height by 11m. Essentially, the redesign resulted in 6 more turbines being dropped from consideration and the distance to houses increased to 720m and over. The design changes are set out in the following table:

<b>Coolglass Project Evolution</b>	Concept Design	Preliminary Design	Current Design Proposal
Distance to Houses No. Turbines	500m 38+	680m 19	720m 13
Shadow Flicker Turbine Height	In line with guidelines 169	Eliminated - no shadow flicker 169	Eliminated - no shadow flicker 180
Potential Capacity	c. 138MW	c. 63MW	c.86MW

#### Design Stages and Next Steps

This proposal is still at design stage and as such details of the proposal may change. Our community engagement team will be working in the area to ensure that information is available and that you have an opportunity to discuss the various aspects of this proposal.

Overview of the Design Stages				
Design Stage	% Design	Description		
Initial Scoping	0 - 40%	Based on high level information		
Preliminary Layout	40% - 80%	Fluid and frequently open to change		
Design Layout	80% - 100%	Sufficiently fixed to allow meaningful discussion		
Planning Layout	100%	Fixed for presentation to the appropriate planning authority		

We would like to hear how you think that this proposal could work best in the area, how you think it could bring the most benefit to the local area and to discuss any queries or concerns that you might have regarding the proposal.

We would also like to discuss with you the reasons behind why this project is being brought forward for consideration and the issues that we need to consider in terms of the move away from a fossil fuel based electricity system towards renewable electricity.

Our community liaison team will be calling to people in the local area and we would invite you to meet with us. If you would like to contact us to arrange a visit, please do not hesitate to do so on the contact details located at the back of this booklet.





#### Community Benefit Fund

A dedicated Community Benefit Fund is a great way to invest in sustainable, local initiatives that benefit the entire community. The funds are directly linked to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see below for more detail) which, as you can see in the table below, focus on things like sustainable communities, climate action, decent work and economic growth, and quality education.

With this project and other local projects being developed within the hinterland of Timahoe and The Swan, there is the potential for over €1 million to be delivered **every year** directly to the local community, based on the State's current Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS)

guidelines.

The Coolglass Wind Farm, as proposed, could bring with it funding in the region of an estimated €470,000 each year, or over €7 million over a 15-year period.

Below are some examples of what has been considered in other areas that we have worked and might give a good indication of what can be achieved and advanced locally.

- Direct benefit schemes, such as near neighbour payments
- Energy efficiency schemes for households
- Funding for local heritage initiatives
- Job creations and investment into local economy
- Tourism
- Funding for recreation projects such as sports clubs and local amenities
- Support for local education schemes

#### Local people know the local area best

In all communities, it is the local people who know the area best. It is you, the people who live here that know the strengths, weaknesses, desires and aspirations of the area. As an area with a community that has proven its ability to identify opportunities and to develop successful initiatives, we believe that the community benefit fund associated with this project could deliver very significant benefits for the local area.

The fundamental principal of any community benefit package that we roll-out is that we seek to work with local people to deliver increased environmental, economic, and social sustainability to local communities.

We would be very interested in hearing what ideas you have on how this wind farm could deliver the most benefit to you and your local area.

#### What are the sustainable development goals?

The Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by 2030.

# SUSTAINABLE G ALS



#### Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS)

Guidance on how the Community Benefit Funds associated with RESS projects are to be administered was developed by the Department of Environment Climate & Communications. The new guidance is centred around community decision-making, so decisions on what will be funded will rest with the local community in the form of a specially formed committee. This will mean that the community has a direct say in how the project benefits their local area. The local communities in this area have a great history in community involvement and that involvement will be key to the success of the fund.

The guidance on how the fund will be divided includes allocations for: nearby houses; not-for-profit community enterprises aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals; administration fees; and initiatives proposed by clubs and societies and other not-for-profit enterprises.

The Community Benefit Fund is a great opportunity for local communities to play a central role in the transition to a zero-carbon, more sustainable, future. They will be instrumental in supporting sustainable initiatives in their locality and ensuring that their area benefits directly from the transformation of our energy system.

#### Project sustainability

Our ambition is to contribute to a more sustainable future for all. At the same time, the way we develop our projects in local communities must be sustainable and responsible – and we are guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The sustainability of the project is also strengthened by delivering climate action and by ensuring a responsible supply chain, Supply chain management covers health and safety, environment and climate, human rights, labour rights, and business ethics. Sustainability is also supported

by engaging in essential and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

Statkraft is an active business supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. For every wind farm we build, there is the potential to build environmentally sustainable measures into the project design. Wind farms can make a positive contribution to the habitat types and diversity of an area through several measures including: planting wildflower meadows; providing sections of species rich grass; improving hedgerows; tree planting; and providing bird nesting

A Biodiversity Management Plan will be provided as part of the planning submission. We see that biodiversity will be integral to the project and our goal is to help maximize the potential for the area. Wildflower meadows, bird boxes and insect hotels are just some of the measures included in our management plan.

Please contact us if you have any ideas for further enhancing the biodiversity of the area.

#### Our sustainable energy future

There are many challenges that we face in terms of energy security, climate change and global instability.

But we can be optimistic about the future. Ireland is on the right path to decarbonisation and has ambitious targets when it comes to climate action.

Renewable energy is a vital part of a cleaner, more sustainable future. Support for appropriate, well-thoughtout projects like this one, will make a positive contribution to the country, and the world, for generations to come.

#### Our obligations and responsibilities

As a developer of renewable energy and as a society in general we have a responsibility to, not only do what is right, but to do it in the right way.

We would hope that our first steps in the development of this proposal will be recognised as open, transparent and respectful. Addressing climate change and energy security warrant nothing less.

Should this proposal come to fruition, it goes without saying that there will be an onus on us to operate the wind farm in a responsible way. This is a responsibility that we take very seriously.

During consultation, our objective is not to seek support for the proposal but rather to provide information which will allow you to develop your own considered opinion, based on accurate information, on what this proposal has to offer.

As this process develops, we will continue to work with you to make sure that this wind farm delivers, not only effective climate action, but that it delivers for the local area.

If you have thoughts or ideas on this proposal, please reach out to us and let us know

### Typical Configuration





# For more information, visit the following websites

www.windenergyireland.com	<b>www.epa.ie</b>
Wind Energy Ireland (WEI)	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>www.seai.ie</b>	www.gsi.ie
Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI)	Geological Survey Ireland
www.un.org/climatechange	www.npws.ie
UN Climate Change Website	National Parks and Wildlife Service
www.climatecouncil.ie	www.laois.ie
Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council	Laois County Council

# Talk to our Community Liaison Officer

George O'Connor is the local Community Liaison Officer for this project. George has many years' experience in both wind energy and working with communities. Whilst he is very knowledgeable about renewable energy projects, he also has a very good appreciation for the fact that individuals and communities have many different thoughts on what works in different areas. Jim O'Reilly works alongside George and they are available to provide information on this proposal or indeed the wider issues of climate action.

We would encourage anyone who has an interest in this proposal to contact us on the below contact details.

#### Dedicated Website

There is a dedicated project website in place and all information and updates relevant to the project will be posted here. Please do have a look at the information provided.



If you have any further questions, you can contact our dedicated Community Liaison Officer on the contact details provided below.



www.coolglasswindfarm.ie

"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

#### **Privacy Policy**

Here at Statkraft we take your privacy seriously and we treat your information with respect. To facilitate environmental safety management systems and to ensure appropriate assessment and development; consultation and domiciliary data within the study area is collected. For more information about how Statkraft processes personal data, please consult our general privacy policy at https://www.statkraft.ie/privacy-statement/ - or you can also direct any specific questions you have to privacy@statkraft.com

#### Contact Us

Community Liaison Officer George O'Connor **Phone:** 087 352 1511 www.coolglasswindfarm.ie





# Coolglass Wind Farm

Project Booklet

Q2 2023

# **Coolglass Wind Farm**



## Introduction

The cost of energy and the cost of living have recently become the biggest topics of discussion in most households across the country.

Statkraft is committed to delivering affordable renewable energy on to our grid system and working with communities to explore how these projects might work best in their local areas. We are also committed to delivering local funds to assist people and communities in a real and tangible way, making lives easier, better, and more sustainable.

Recent global events have challenged us to ask ourselves if it makes sense to pay for much of our energy to come from overseas. The relevance of this question is all the greater when we have ample sources of clean energy here at home. Irish wind farms protect consumers every day by pushing expensive gas generators off the system and reducing our dependency on imported fossil fuels.

As a generation, we have a unique opportunity to make a real difference in securing our own energy independence. We believe that we can deliver for the present, while safeguarding our future.

If planning permission is granted for Coolglass Wind Farm, Statkraft Ireland aims to partner with FuturEnergy Ireland on this project.

## The need for this project

The impacts of climate change on our world are indisputable. We are all being challenged to consider the role we play in climate action and how we can reduce our reliance on costly and polluting imported fossil fuels. The world is getting warmer, and extreme weather events are a frequent occurrence. We alone cannot stop climate change, but we can take action to address it. Renewable energy development is a vital part of that action.

Price hikes have put huge pressure on households and businesses and exacerbated the cost-ofliving crisis. Our electricity demands are also on the rise and providing sufficient supplies to avoid potential power shortages has become ever more challenging.

Furthermore, energy security in Ireland has recently come into sharp focus. Having our own secure energy supply will shield us from global market energy price increases and continue to help protect families and businesses from the worst effects of a crisis caused by our reliance on fossil fuels. We can tap into our own natural resources and roll out clean, affordable energy that won't break the bank.



#### Engagement

Understanding the local area, its people, environment and history form a core part of how we approach the design and development of renewable energy projects. Our dedicated Community Liason team for this project have endeavoured over the past number of months to meet with as many members of the community as possible. During this process, the importance of local heritage and culture was highlighted. As well as that, feedback around job creation and investment in energy efficiency schemes for local houses is understood to be important.

Building on this engagement, we have created a dedicated **Coolglass Virtual Consultation Room** which can be accessed by scanning the QR code below.



This will help provide us with more information and allow us to bring a considered approach to the project development.

The communities in the area around the proposed Coolglass Wind Farm have an opportunity to consider this renewable energy project and how, if granted planning permission, it could make a real difference to the locality.

### Local heritage and culture

As with all our projects, we endeavour to respect and consider the local heritage and culture of the community. Following public consultation to date, we have identified the sites below as particularly important, all of which have been taken into consideration in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

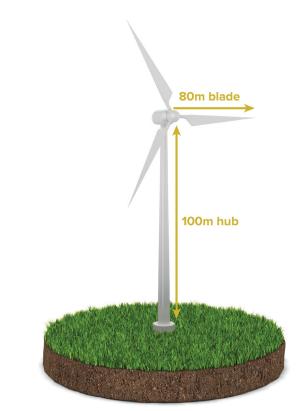
- Timahoe Round Tower
- The ancient monastic site of Saint Mochua
- Wolfhill coalmine
- Swan brick factory
- Swan fireclay factory

More information is available on the dedicated virtual consultation room which can be accessed via the QR code above.

#### At a glance

- 13 turbine project
- Distance to nearest turbine over 700m
- Capacity to provide clean energy up to 65,000 homes
- Over 80MW of renewable energy to the Irish electricity grid
- Zero shadow flicker policy
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- All cables underground

## Typical configuration





## Project proposal & design process

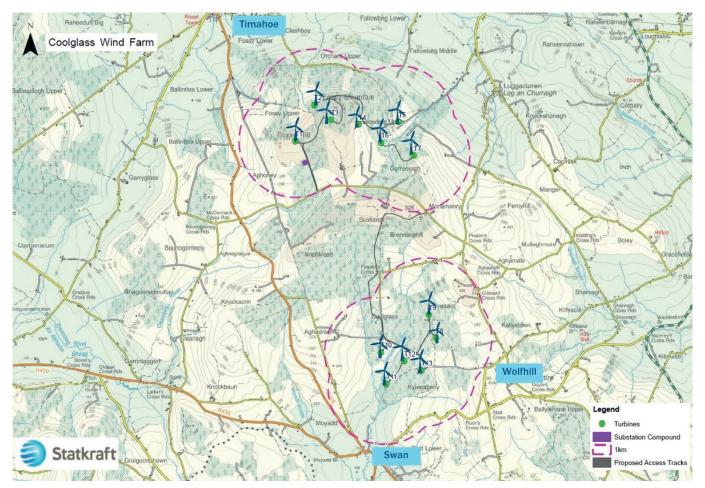
As with all our projects, local appropriateness is a fundamental consideration along with careful site selection.

The Coolglass location was initially identified following a review of areas that could potentially allow for the development of this type. The initial design layouts, which focused on the capacity of this area to produce renewable energy, were updated to incorporate local considerations. These included the project distance from nearby homes along with local environmental constraints, ensuring the project would be suitable and work well for the locality. A full project overview can be found at **coolglasswindfarm.ie.** 

As this proposal has a wind energy output of over 50MW, a direct submission to An Bord Pleanála as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application is a requirement. Laois County Council will be expected to review and actively input on any submission.

A Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) is a development which is of strategic economic or social importance to a local area.

## 🔳 Site map



## Photomontages



Timahoe Village



Wolfhill



The Swan

A complete series of images along with detailed maps will be available to view on the dedicated virtual consultation room.







## Community benefits

A key feature of all our projects is the Community Benefit Fund made available through RESS. These funds allow for a significant sum of money to be used for the community's economic, environmental, social and cultural wellbeing. The fundamental principle of the benefit packages we roll out is that we seek to work with local people to deliver improved sustainability to their communities. For example, following public consultation and feedback, a feasibility study is being carried out for a recreational amenity trail. This would join Timahoe village to the Fossy Mountain and Swan Loop trails, providing the option to reach trailheads without using a car.

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) provides support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland.

We recognise that every community is different and that it is the local people who know their area best. Decisions on what will be funded will rest with the members of a specially formed committee, allowing them to shape the strategy to maximise the benefits for the entire community.

The Community Benefit Fund is a great opportunity to play a central role in the transition to a zerocarbon, more sustainable future, and a particular focus of the funds is to support local initiatives that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). See below for more detail.

The Coolglass Wind Farm, as proposed, could bring with it funding in the region of an estimated €470,000 each year, or €7 million over a 15-year period.



# A sustainable future

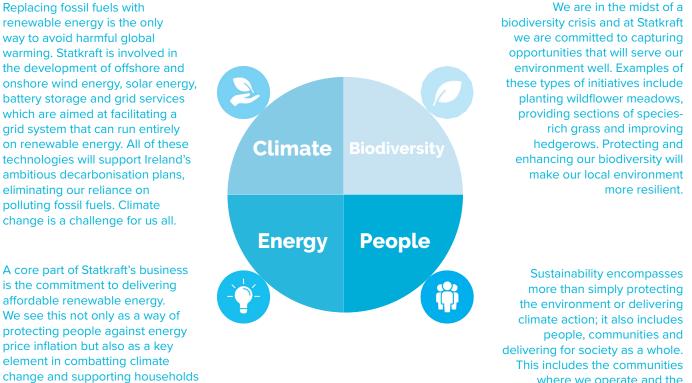
At Statkraft, we are committed to creating a world where renewable energy powers every community, home and business. We believe sustainability is about more than operating responsibly. It's an opportunity to support the communities we're a part of and to make a bigger impact on the world. We base our operations on a strong commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices, with the aforementioned Sustainable Development Goals providing direction for our work. Statkraft regards climate, energy, biodiversity and human rights as particularly important areas to which the company is well-positioned to contribute. We take a precautionary approach to environment.

This means that we conduct risk assessments and implement mitigating actions where needed. We are acutely aware of the increase in biodiversity loss and the importance of biological diversity for nature and our way of living. For every wind farm we construct, there is the potential to build environmentally sustainable measures into the project design. For example, Statkraft is an active business supporter of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and for the Coolglass Wind Farm, a Biodiversity Management Plan will be provided as part of the planning submission.

Wind farms can make a positive contribution to the habitat types and diversity of an area through several measures including planting wildflower meadows, providing sections of species-rich grass, improving hedgerows, tree planting, and providing opportunities for bird nesting.

Sustainability is also supported by engaging in essential and meaningful stakeholder engagement. It provides opportunities for Statkraft to align practices and actions with environmental issues that matter most to the local community, thereby helping to drive long-term sustainability. This dialogue provides us with valuable input and helps us to continuously improve and strengthen our relationships and business practices.

# What does sustainability mean to us? And what does that mean to you?



where we operate and the people who work with us.

# Sourcing information responsibly

and businesses.

Information is available from many sources in relation to wind energy; however, much of this can be inaccurate and misleading. It is important to ensure the information you have to hand is accurate. Here you will find helpful resources and we are also happy to direct you towards sources of genuine peer-reviewed information, should you request it.



# For more information, visit the following websites

www.windenergyireland.com	<b>www.epa.ie</b>	
Wind Energy Ireland (WEI)	Environmental Protection Agency	
<b>www.seai.ie</b>	<b>www.gsi.ie</b>	
Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI)	Geological Survey Ireland	
<b>www.un.org/climatechange</b>	www.npws.ie	
UN Climate Change Website	National Parks and Wildlife Service	
www.climatecouncil.ie	<b>www.laois.ie</b>	
Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council	Laois County Council	

# Talk to our Community Liaison Officer

The Community Liaison Team has years of experience in both wind energy and working with communities. While the team members are very knowledgeable about renewable energy projects, they also appreciate the fact that individuals and communities have different thoughts on what works in their respective areas. The team is available to provide information on this proposal or indeed the wider issues of climate action. We would encourage anyone who has an interest in this proposal to get in touch with us using the contact details below.

## Dedicated virtual consultation room

There is a dedicated project virtual consultation room in place where all information and updates relevant to the Coolglass Wind Farm project will be posted.

Please do have a look at the information provided.

If you have any further questions, you can contact our dedicated Community Liaison Officer on the contact details provided below.



www.coolglasswindfarm.ie

Positive engagement and feedback on this proposal will ensure that all possible opportunities can be captured and ultimately delivered, should the project come to fruition.

As the proposal includes sections of Coillte property, please e-mail Isinfo@coillte.ie with any Coillte specific enquiries.

### **Privacy policy**

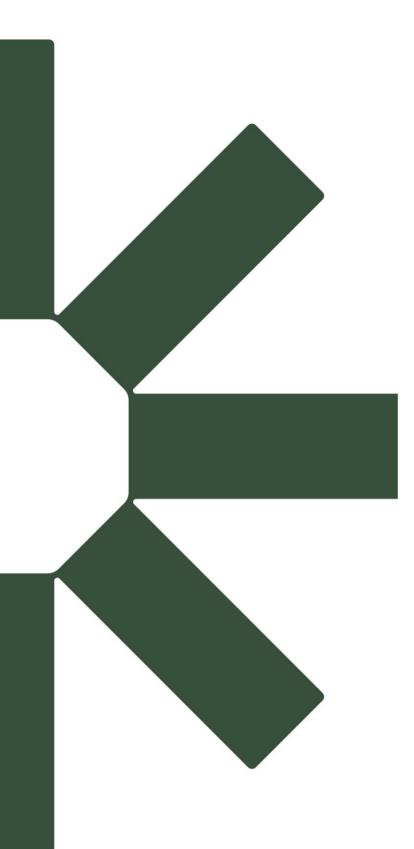
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#### Contact us

Community Liaison Officer George O'Connor **Phone:** 087 352 1511 **E: info@coolglasswindfarm.ie** 







Making Sustainability Happen