



Moneypoint Security of Supply

Planning Report

February 2024

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Moneypoint Security of Supply

Planning Report

February 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

Mott MacDonald Ireland Limited (Mott MacDonald) has been appointed by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) to prepare and lodge a planning application for development at the existing Moneypoint Generating Station site in the townlands of Carrowdotia South, Carrowdotia North and Ballymacrinan, Killimer, Kilrush, County Clare. The proposed development will comprise the transition and conversion of the existing coal fired power station's primary fuel to Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), with limited run hours for a period of five years until the end of December 2029, when Moneypoint Generating Station will cease generation.

ESB has stated its intention to cease burning coal at Moneypoint Generating Station as part of its 2040 strategy - "Driven to Make a Difference", which commits ESB to a zero-carbon future and includes the development of its Green Atlantic project, which will see Moneypoint become a strategic resource for the offshore wind industry and as a location for key grid services. The proposed development would allow Moneypoint Generating Station to continue operating to support the national security of energy supply, subsequent to the burning of coal being ceased at the plant, allowing the station to continue to supply the national grid during its transition to the development of the "Green Atlantic @ Moneypoint" project.

This planning report provides an outline of the planning considerations relating to the proposed development and forms part of the planning application documentation being submitted as part of the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application to An Bord Pleanála (ABP).

1.2 The Applicant

ESB was established in 1927 as a statutory corporation in the Republic of Ireland under the Electricity (Supply) Act 1927. With a holding of 95%, ESB is majority owned by the Irish Government with the remaining 5% held by the trustees of an Employee Share Ownership Plan.

The ESB owns and operates assets across the electricity market, from generation, through transmission and distribution to supply. Approximately 43% of electricity generation capacity in the Irish all-island market is provided by the ESB, which also supplies electricity to approximately 1.4 million customers. The ESB Group employs approximately 7,000 people. ESB's mission is to bring sustainable and competitively priced energy solutions to its customers and its vision is to be Ireland's foremost energy company competing successfully in the all-island market.

1.3 Project Need

The proposed development relates to EirGrid's requests to ESB to enter into a Targeted Contract Mechanism (TCM) for the continued running of the existing ca. 900MW Moneypoint thermal generation plant for the purpose of security of supply generation and strategic fuel storage in response to the national emergency relating to security of electricity supply.

EirGrid identified a capacity shortfall in the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2021 - 2023. Moneypoint Generating Station represents a key strategic electricity generation station for the State; as such, EirGrid has requested that electricity transmission generation operations at Moneypoint Generating Station continue in the light of increasing demand due to a growing population and increasing electrification in all sectors of the economy¹. The extended operation

¹ Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2023 - Consultation Report (EirGrid/SONI, November 2023) [accessed 16.11.2023]

of older generators, such as Moneypoint, is being sought until new conventional electricity generation capacity is developed. Accompanying the demand increase, is the deficit in electricity supply from renewable energy sources. It is estimated that large scale offshore wind development which is capable of providing such electricity capacity to address the shortfall, will not be ready until after 2030.

Under Section 9 of the Electricity Regulation Act, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has a statutory duty to have regard to ensuring security of supply and ensuring that all reasonable demands for electricity are met. Regulation 28 of Statutory Instrument 60 of 2005 – European Communities (Internal Market in Electricity) Regulations, 2005, puts additional obligations on the CRU and the Transmission System Operator - EirGrid, to ensure security of supply. EirGrid's role includes monitoring and reporting on security of supply, including through the Generation Capacity Statement, and making recommendations to the CRU on measures necessary to cover peak demand and address any shortfalls in capacity. The CRU is then required to take such measures as it considers necessary to protect security of supply.

The CRU Information Paper Security of Electricity Supply – Programme of Actions, September 2021², was issued to “provide an update on security of electricity supply and the programme of actions the CRU is undertaking to ensure security of supply in the coming years, in cooperation with EirGrid, the Department of Environment, Communications and Climate (DECC), the energy industry and other stakeholders”. The Programme of Actions was published in tandem with the publication by EirGrid and SONI of the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2021, which outlines the current challenges facing the electricity market – as elaborated on below. The Paper sets out, inter alia, a programme of actions that the CRU, in line with its statutory duties, is undertaking in cooperation with EirGrid, DECC, the energy industry and other stakeholders. This included “*the extended availability and operation of older generation capacity, on a temporary basis, that was otherwise expected to retire in this timeframe*”. The wording of this action has been slightly amended in the latest Update to the Programme of Actions, published in October 2023 – “*extending the operation of older generation units, on a temporary basis, to be called upon only when necessary, until the arrival of new enduring capacity*”³.

The CRU September 2021 Programme of Actions was published in tandem with the publication by EirGrid and SONI of the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2021. As the electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO), EirGrid has forecast electricity demand and supply in the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2022 - 2031. This latest Statement notes that the existing generating station at Moneypoint may not qualify for the 2024 / 2025 T-4 Capacity Auction because the Clean Energy Package targets all generation to be under 550g / kWh by 2025 in order to qualify for payment under a capacity mechanism.

The forecast assumes that Moneypoint Generating Station will remain available as an electricity generating node until a point in 2025. The same report contains forecasts for the build out of renewables, and – notwithstanding the forecasts set out in sectoral plans e.g. The National Energy Climate Plan notes the limited arrival of offshore wind capacity until after 2030 when significant resources become available.

It concludes that – with all scenarios modelled, there is an initial and prolonged adequacy deficit in electricity generation. Working to a median demand scenario, significant capacity deficits are identified in 2024 and 2025 - driven by the retirement of existing generation plant and strong demand. Across all scenarios, in light of increasing demand, significant deficits prevail for the

² <https://cruie-live-96ca64acab2247eca8a850a7e54b-5b34f62.divio-media.com/documents/CRU21115-Security-of-Electricity-Supply--Programme-of-Actions.pdf> (accessed 16.11.2023)

³ https://cruie-live-96ca64acab2247eca8a850a7e54b-5b34f62.divio-media.com/documents/Electricity_Security_of_Supply_Programme_of_Work_Update_October_2023.pdf (accessed 16.11.2023)

remainder of the decade, notwithstanding the availability of new capacity units (from 2026), and the energisation of the Celtic Interconnector (in 2027) – although it is noted that does not account for mitigation associated with proposals including emergency generation and demand-side management. As noted above, this situation prevails notwithstanding the assumption that Moneypoint Generating Station remains open until a point in 2025.

It is notable that the generation capacity constraints identified will occur at a time when the State is both dealing with a prevailing energy crisis and seeking to deliver - through new consenting mechanisms, large-scale renewable generation - specifically offshore renewables, in accordance with:

- National Energy and Climate Plan
- Programme for Government – Our Shared Future
- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan (2021 – 2030)
- National Marine Planning Framework
- Climate Action Plan 2024

ESB has therefore entered into an agreement with EirGrid to progress certain time-sensitive enabling works and long lead spares procurement at Moneypoint Generating Station, in advance of the conclusion of the TCM process. The preparation of planning documents is an agreed part of advanced services under this agreement. The TCM will be for up to five years, for the period of five years until the end of 2029, with options to terminate early if additional new electricity generators connect to the grid.

ESB thus proposes, as part of its cessation of the use of coal for energy generation and renewables transition, and in order to meet EirGrid's requested Security of Supply measures, to switch to the use of HFO as the primary fuel for up to five years post 2024. In this regard, HFO offers better flexibility for a security of supply generator as it offers quicker start-up and response times, reduced maintenance, operational costs and staffing levels, is less weather dependant resulting in coal deterioration, and offers better fuel supply options.

The proposed conversion will entail the construction of two new HFO tanks to double existing onsite HFO storage capacity to 100,000 tonnes, the reinstatement of the auxiliary steam boiler system, the modification of the existing Ash Storage Area (ASA) to allow for additional Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) by-product storage, new reclaimed ash unloading facilities at the batching plant and FGD absorbers and the partial demolition of the coal yard equipment and conveyors.

As part of the application, ESB also proposes to remove / demolish redundant items of coal handling equipment. The scale of these demolition works is informed by health and safety considerations – notably which items of plant should be removed in the period 2025 to 2030; balanced against ESB's desire to 'mothball' items of plant and equipment pending possible re-use and repurposing. Any remaining structures, will be managed in-line with established health and safety protocols, pending re-use or decommissioning, subject of a separate consent if required.

Currently coal fired generation can take place on all units without any annual limit i.e, to a total run time of 26,280 hours per year. Even allowing for maximum generating time, the conversion of Moneypoint to HFO and the changed operating profile will significantly reduce emissions from Moneypoint and move the station to a lower carbon profile, while supporting energy security on the island.

The existing generation units are able to run as dual fuel units (running on either coal or HFO), therefore as coal stocks reduce units will be able to immediately operate on HFO subsequent to planning permission being granted, and upon request from EirGrid.

The proposed conversion thus requires minimal physical works and alterations to the existing station and can occur without delay or interruption to generating activity. No modifications will be required on the existing common or utilised HFO systems to achieve this 100% HFO capability, over and above routine maintenance.

1.4 Legal Context

Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), (hereafter referred to as 'The Act'), states that: *"(1) An application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule (inserted by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006) shall, if the following condition is satisfied, be made to the Board under section 37E and not to a planning authority.*

That condition is that, following consultations under section 37B, the Board serves on the prospective applicant a notice in writing under that section stating that, in the opinion of the Board, the proposed development would, if carried out, fall within one or more of the following paragraphs, namely —

- a. the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,*
- b. the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,*
- c. the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority."*

Schedule 7 of Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereafter referred to as 'the Act'), includes under 'Energy Infrastructure', the following development description, which is of direct relevance to the proposed development:

"a thermal power station or other combustion installation with a total energy output of 300MW or more' and 'an industrial installation for the production of electricity, steam or hot water with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more".

In accordance with the provisions of Section 37B, the ESB therefore formally wrote to ABP on 24 May 2023 and requested a written determination from the Board (ABP Ref. PC03.317184), as to whether or not the proposed development was considered Strategic Development under Schedule 7 of Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

By letter dated 17 November 2023, ABP subsequently advised the ESB that following consultations, the Board *"is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of paragraphs 37A(2)(a), (b) and (c) of the Act (and that) accordingly, the Board has decided that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Any application for permission for the proposed development must, therefore, be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 37E of the Act. A copy of this determination is included with the planning application documentation cover letter.*

Moneypoint Generating Station is licensed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under an Industrial Emissions (IE) Licence (Register number: P0605-04). The proposed development includes works located entirely within the IE licenced boundary of Moneypoint Generating Station which is an Upper-tier establishment to which the Chemicals Act (Control of

Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (the COMAH Regulations) apply.

This SID planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Moneypoint Generating Station operates, and will continue to operate, under the existing Industrial Emissions licence regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The addition of a new auxiliary boiler stack will require an additional emission point to be added to the licence, this will be accommodated by submitting a technical amendment application to the EPA. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Permit will also require an update as a result of the proposed development.

1.4.1 Pre-application Consultation with An Bord Pleanála

As part of the formal pre-application consultation process with ABP, a [virtual] pre-application meeting was held on 11 August 2023. This meeting was an introductory meeting to inform An Bord Pleanála of the project need and provide details of the proposed development. ESB highlighted the forecasted 750-1000MW deficit in generating capacity from 2026 which ultimately provides the impetus for the proposed development in order to address security of supply issues and concerns.

1.4.2 Clare County Council Consultation

In addition to the above and as part of the EIA scoping process, Mott MacDonald and the ESB also held a pre-planning meeting with Clare County Council on 20 September 2023, to provide an overview of the proposed development. Clare County Council stated the need to comprehensively address the Clare County Development Plan policies, including those of relevance within the Shannon integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary. Clare County Council also queried the necessity of limiting any resultant planning application to a specified timeframe, following which the ESB reiterated that the cessation of operations at the generating station plant is targeted for the end of 2029.

1.5 Report Structure

The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** This chapter sets out the background to the proposed development in the context of ESB responsibilities and future plans for ESB's landholding, including the application site.
- **Chapter 2: Description of the Development** This details all elements of the proposed development.
- **Chapter 3: Planning Context** This section provides an overview of planning policy throughout the planning hierarchy and provides an indication as to how the proposed development is consistent with the realisation of these planning policies and objectives. It also sets out the land use and zoning context of the proposed development site relative to the provisions of Clare County Development Plan.
- **Chapter 4: Planning History** This chapter details the planning history at the application site and details other consented projects or future projects within the surrounding environs which may overlap or interact with the proposed development.
- **Chapter 5: Relevant Supporting Assessments** This chapter details supporting environmental assessments that have been prepared to support the planning application (including the Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement and COMAH Land Use Planning Assessment).

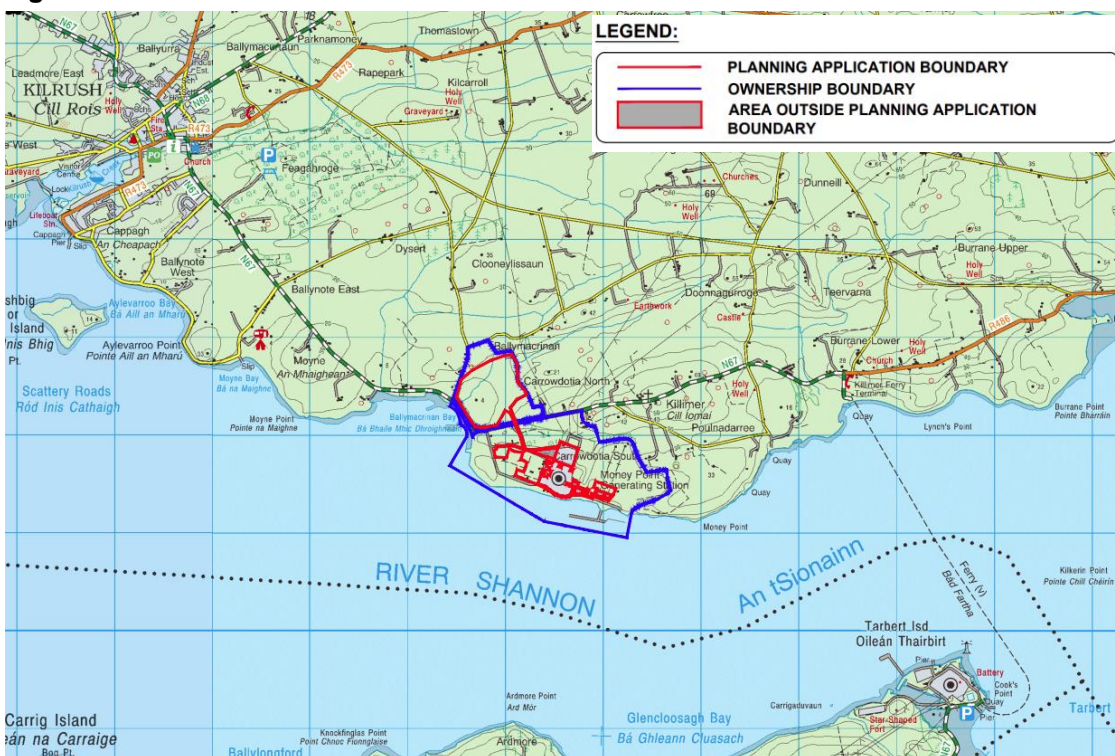
- **Chapter 6: Planning Assessment and Overall Conclusion** This chapter summaries how the proposed development is in accordance with strategic planning and policy considerations throughout the planning hierarchy and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

2 Description of Development

2.1 Site Location

The application site lies within the footprint of the existing Moneypoint Generating Station (refer to Figure 2.1) in the townlands of Carrowdotia South, Carrowdotia North and Ballymacrinan, Killimer, Kilrush, County Clare, on the northern shore of the (Lower) Shannon Estuary. The proposed development site measures approximately 53.1 hectares. It is located approximately 4km south of Kilrush, the nearest town, and approximately 1.8km west of Killimer village.

Figure 2.1: Site Location



Source: ESB, Strategic Site Location, Drawing Ref: QP-000017-65-D451-001-001-000

Moneypoint Generating Station lies within a larger ESB landholding comprising approximately 180 hectares of land onshore and approximately 65 hectares within the nearshore. The extent of land above the (historic) high water mark within ESB’s ownership is presented in Figure 2.1. There are no works proposed below the (historic) high water mark (i.e within the nearshore) as part of the proposed development.

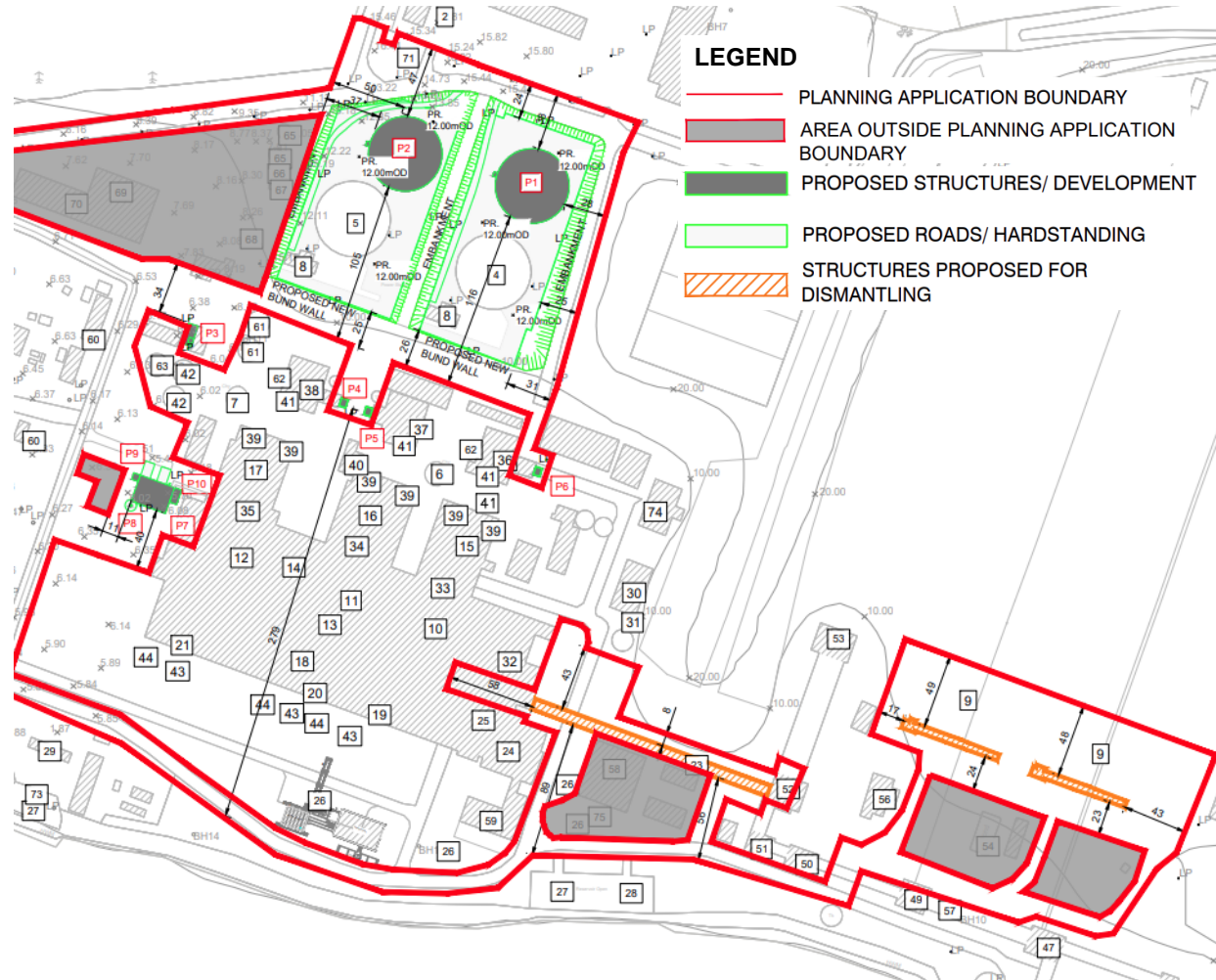
Set within a rural landscape, the application site lies within a significant industrial landbank, which has long been associated with the generation of electricity and associated activities, including fuel management, wind energy generation and electrical transmission infrastructure.

2.2 Description of the Proposed Development

The description of development produced below has been used within the planning application statutory notices and is reflected in the proposed site layout illustrated at Figure 2.2;

1. Transition and conversion of the existing coal fired power station's primary fuel from coal to Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) for limited hours of operation and a temporary period of five years until the 31 December 2029;
2. Construction of 2no. HFO tanks each with a capacity of 25,000 tonnes (approx. 48.7m diameter x 15m H) and associated bund walls (approx. 5.0m high);
3. Construction of a new boiler house (approx. 24m L x 18m W x 11m H) to house 2no. auxiliary boilers (1no. electric and 1no. distillate, each 22.7MW (thermal output), including:
 - 1no. Blow down vessel (approx. 4.5m wide x 13m high)
 - 1no. Exhaust Stack (approx. 1.0m diameter and 30m H)
 - 1no. Annex structure (approx. 10.0m L x 5m W x 4m H)
4. Construction of an extension to each of the existing 3no. Flue Gas Desulphurisation Absorbers (FGD) - units 1, 2 and 3, to provide additional reclaimed ash unloading facilities (ash injection plant extension), comprising:
 - 1no. conveyor enclosure (approx. 7.0m L x 2.5m W x 22m H)
 - 1no. hopper enclosure (approx. 6m L x 5m W x 6m H)
5. Construction of a reclaimed ash unloading facility at the existing landfill capping batching plant, comprising of a hopper enclosure adjoining the existing batching plant (approx. 14.0m L x 6.5m W x 6.0m H) and conveyor enclosure (approx. 3.5m L x 3.5m W x 11.5m H)
6. Dismantling and removal of 2no. mobile stacker reclaimers and 1no. coal conveyor bridge;
7. Changes to existing permitted Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) by-product and ash storage area (ASA) arrangements (Pl. Ref. 14/373) to utilise spare capacity in the existing ASA [capping layer thickness increase from 0.6m (*minimum*) up to a maximum of 1.6 meters] with an overall proposed reduction in height of the currently permitted ASA by approx. 1.85m; and,
8. All associated ancillary site development works to facilitate the proposed development, including a new lighting arrangement, surface water drainage, internal roads and temporary construction compounds and laydown areas.

Figure 2.2: Proposed Site Layout (excluding the Ash Storage Area)



Source: ESB, Proposed Site Layout Sheet 2 of 3, Drawing Ref: QP-000017-65-D451-005-002-000

2.2.1 Landfill, Onsite Repository Areas and Proposed Modifications

The proposed development provides for alterations to existing permitted Ash Storage Area (refer to Figure 2.4). The alterations proposed will allow for the utilisation of the spare capacity in the existing Ash Storage Area (ASA) to store the Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) by-product, when the existing FGD by-product landfill A reaches full capacity.

There are three consented repository areas on the Moneypoint site, as described further below and shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Indicative Existing Permitted Landfill/ Repository Areas



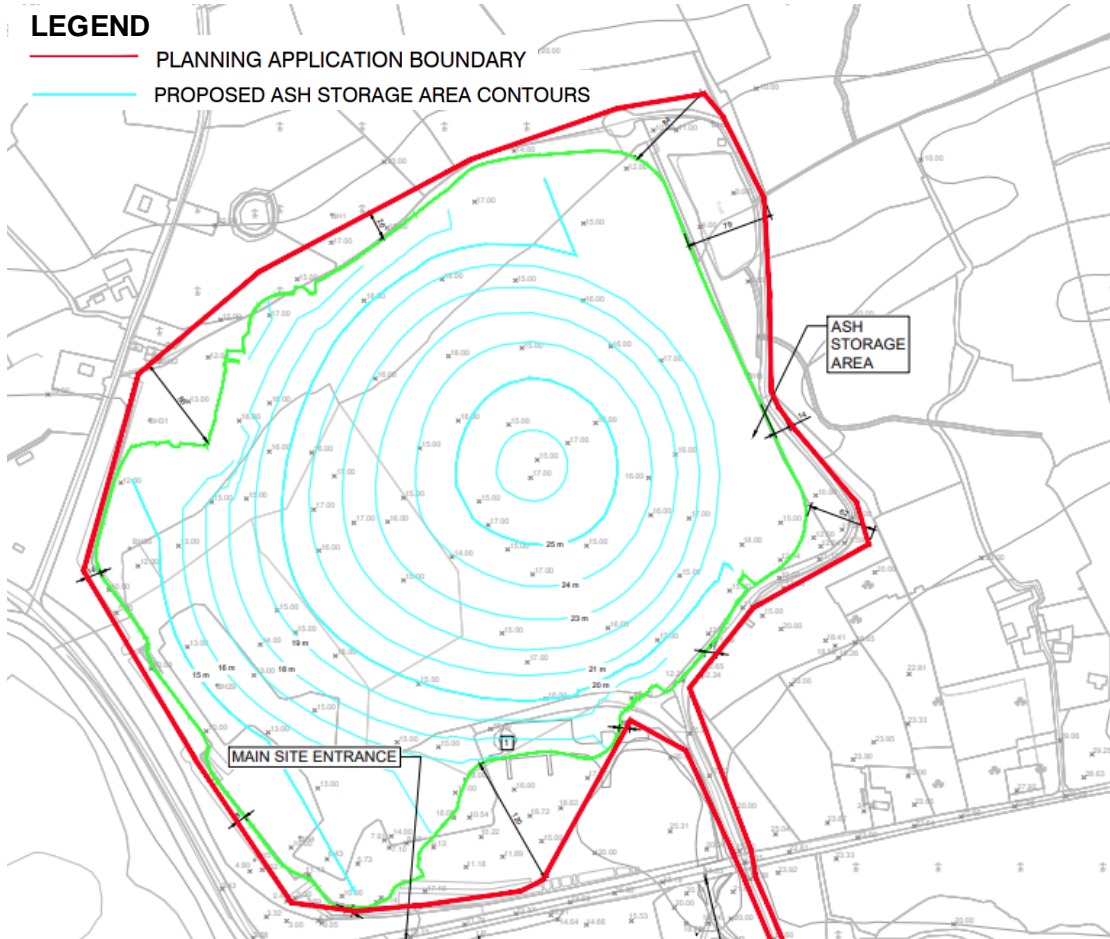
Source: ESB

- FGD Landfill Area A:** FGD by-product is presently landfilled into FGD by-product Landfill Area A to the east of the coal yard, however capacity is expected to be reached in Q4 2024. Currently approximately 33% of the Landfill Area A is capped, with the remainder proposed to be capped once it reaches capacity.
- FGD Landfill Area B:** Permission is in place for an additional FGD by-product Landfill Area B to the west of the main generating units. At present, this area is used for site laydown and contractor areas, and no FGD by-product has been landfilled in this area. Landfill Area B has now been earmarked as part of the future Green Atlantic Project. It would be an inefficient use of land to form and deposit material in Landfill Area B for the limited remaining timeframe of the station's operation.
- Ash Storage Area (ASA):** The footprint of the existing permitted ASA covers approximately 25 hectares. Existing planning and EPA consent is in place for the storage of up to 4.8 million m³ of ash in the ASA. The planning permission (P14/373) for the current capacity was granted in 2014 and details four phases of landfill management, including tonnages and layer dimensions. Neither the planning approval, nor the EPA licence detail/cover the composition or profile of the ASA.

In relation to the above, it should be noted and is clarified (for the avoidance of doubt), that the Ash Storage Area (ASA) as described in this Planning Report, relates to the permitted Ash

Repository Site (ARA) as described in planning application reference 14/373 (granted by Clare County Council).

Figure 2.4: Proposed Ash Storage Area Layout



Source: ESB, Proposed Site Layout, Sheet 3 of 3, Drawing Ref: QP-000017-65-D451-005-003-000

A survey of the ASA was completed in June 2023, and indicated that there was approximately 1.3 million m³ of capacity remaining. Currently FGD by-product is landfilled into FGD by-product Landfill Area A, however capacity is due to be reached in late 2024 based on the present load factor estimations. It is therefore on the basis of the remaining capacity that the subject planning application seeks changes to the areas for the repository of FGD by-product and ash until the end of operations of Moneypoint Generating Station as a conventional generation station.

3 Policy Context and Planning Appraisal

3.1 Introduction

The need for the proposed development is supported by European, national, regional, and local planning policies and objectives relating to energy development and energy security of supply. This section provides an overview of these and will demonstrate how the proposed development will be consistent with the realisation of these commitments, policies and objectives. It also sets out the land use and zoning context of the proposed development site relative to the provisions of the Clare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029.

3.2 European Policy

3.2.1 Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) (Recast)

Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) was adopted in 2010 and came into force in 2011 repealing and replacing seven previous pieces of legislation, including Directive 2001/80/EC on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants.

The main purpose of this directive is to reduce harmful industrial emissions, in particular through better application of best available techniques (BAT). This is in order to provide benefits to both citizens' health and the environment.

Chapter III of Directive 2010/75/EU contains specific provisions for combustion plants where the total rated thermal input of which is equal to or greater than 50 MW, irrespective of the type of fuel used.

Project Response

The proposed development has been subject to several emissions modelling exercises (including qualitative dust assessments, annual mass emissions comparisons and atmospheric dispersion modelling), as outlined within Chapter 7 of the accompanying EIAR. The results of these have indicated that the generating station will comply with all relevant emission limit values as outlined by the Directive, and that the proposed development will not have any significant impacts on air quality. Additionally, the replacement of coal with HFO will result in a reduction of approximately 29% greenhouse gas emissions during operational periods. The proposed development will be subject to an amended Industrial Emissions Licence, as authorised by the EPA.

3.2.2 Energy Roadmap 2050

The Energy Roadmap 2050 was published in 2011 by the European Commission. The roadmap explores how the energy system can transition to a lower carbon system, in line with the targets for reducing greenhouse gasses – as outlined in the Renewable Energy directive. In addition, the roadmap also explores opportunities for increasing competitiveness and supply. Four main routes were identified in this roadmap for achieving a more sustainable, secure, and complete energy system by 2050:

- Energy efficiency
- Renewable energy
- Nuclear Energy

- Carbon capture and storage

These routes were combined in various ways to create seven scenarios for the future energy landscape, and it was found that in each scenario, increasing the share and use of renewable energy was crucial, regardless of the chosen mix of energy. In this regard, the Roadmap outlines that if investment into infrastructure and new technology is not committed to, there will be increased cost and disruptions.

In regard to the use of oil for energy generation, the roadmap notes that “*Oil is likely to remain in the energy mix even in 2050*”. The Roadmap recognises that maintaining a foothold in the oil market is important to the EU economy and for ensuring security of supply.

Project Response

The Roadmap outlines that while renewable energy will pay a larger part in overall energy generation in the coming years, oil will continue to play a role until 2050 and is still important to the economy. The proposed development entails a change from using coal to HFO for energy generation at the existing Moneypoint Generating Station, in line with ESB’s commitment to phasing out coal usage.

As noted in section 1.3, coal fired generation can currently take place on all units without any annual limit i.e. to a total run time of 26,280 hours per year. Even allowing for maximum generating time, the conversion to HFO and the changed operating profile will assist in reducing emissions from Moneypoint Generating Station. The proposed development will move the generating station to a lower carbon profile as part of the ESB’s transition to a renewables focussed energy generation future, while continuing to support energy security on the island.

3.2.3 Landfill Directive (EU) 1999/31/EC

The Landfill Directive (as amended) sets out strict operational requirements for landfills and aims to prevent or reduce (as much as possible) any negative impacts on surface water, groundwater, soil, air or human health. This is managed through the introduction of stringent technical requirements.

The Directive categorises landfill sites into three categories: hazardous waste, non-hazardous waste, and inert (waste which will not decompose or burn, such as gravel, sand and stone). It further outlines that operators of landfill sites must apply for a permit and must adhere to strict perimeters for the waste that is accepted.

Directive 1999/31/EC was later amended by Directive 2018/850, which placed further restrictions on the landfilling of all waste that is suitable for recycling or other material or energy recovery from 2030.

Project Response

Moneypoint Generating Station is licensed for landfilling activities under the Industrial Emissions Directive (Annex I, paragraph 5.4) as having met the definition of a landfill under Article 2(g) of the Landfill Directive. The landfill, referred to as the Ash Storage Area (ASA), is classed as non-hazardous.

In accordance with the proposed development, the continued operation of the Moneypoint Generating Station under HFO to 2029 will result in the reduced production of ash/FGD by-product, thus resulting in an altered capping profile of the ASA. Capping will be undertaken, as required by the extant IE licence, in accordance with the requirements of the Landfill Directive.

3.2.4 RePower EU Plan

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU published communication (COM/2022/108) which called on member states to treat the planning, construction and

operation of renewable energy projects, and their connection to the grid and the related grid itself to be “*in the overriding public interest and in the interest of public safety*” and to qualify for the most favourable procedure available in the planning system.

Following on from (COM/2022/108), the European Commission published the RePower EU plan (COM/2022/230) which provided a framework for “*ending the EU’s dependence on Russian fossil fuels*” and “*securing the long-term sustainability, cost effectiveness, and energy supply to the EU*”. These objectives would be accomplished by building on the European Green Deal and the ‘Fit for 55’ proposals, and in this regard the plan outlines an additional set of actions that would:

- Save energy
- Diversify supplies
- Quickly substitute fossil fuels by accelerating Europe’s clean energy transition
- Smartly combine investments and reforms

Project Response

The proposed development relates to EirGrid’s request to ESB to enter into a Services Agreement for the continued running of the existing Moneypoint thermal generation plant for the purpose of security of supply generation and strategic fuel storage in response to the national emergency relating to security of electricity supply. The proposed development is needed to ensure Moneypoint Generating Station can continue to operate and serve national energy security of supply needs, as it continues to transition away from coal. In this regard, HFO offers better flexibility for a security of supply generator as it offers quicker start-up and response times, reduced maintenance, operational costs and staffing levels, is less weather dependant resulting in coal deterioration, and offers better fuel supply options. This will ensure the generating station can continue to support the energy grid at limited times until 2029.

3.2.5 Revised Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2023/2413

Directive (EU) 2023/2413 amends Directive (EU) 2018/2001 (commonly referred to as REDII), Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repeals Council Directive (EU) 2015/652. The Revised Directive entered into force on 20 November 2023. There will be an 18-month period to transpose most of the directive’s provisions into national law, with a shorter deadline of July 2024 for some provisions related to permitting for renewables.

The Revised Directive sets an overall binding renewable energy target of at least 42.5% at EU level by 2030 but aiming for 45%. This is a minimum increase of 10.5% on the REDII Recast renewable energy targets and seeks to further the legal framework for the achievement of the European Green Deal, and ultimately achieving the objective of climate neutrality in the Union, by 2050.

In 2021, renewable energy accounted for 21.8% of the EU’s energy consumption. With the new binding target of 42.5%, this will require a doubling of the existing consumption share of renewable energy in the Union. The Revised Directive has been introduced as a response to the need to speed up the delivery of the EU’s clean energy transition.

The Revised Directive sets out numerous amendments to REDII including additional sectoral targets for the use of renewable energy in final consumption. It also envisages coordinated mapping for the deployment of renewables, carried out by Member States to identify the

domestic potential and the available land surface, sub-surface, sea or inland water for renewable energy plants and the related infrastructure, such as grid and storage facilities.

Project Response

The proposed development, in and of itself, will not assist in the achievement of the targets set out under the Revised REDII. However, the proposed development is part of a wider strategy by the ESB to phase out the use of coal at the existing station, and this in itself will reduce emissions from the station. Additionally, the proposed development will only operate when required to support the national grid. This will facilitate the continued operation of the station and allow it to support the energy grid when other sources, like renewables, cannot meet the demand. The proposed development seeks to ensure that national security of supply is maintained up to 2029 during the transition to a low carbon energy sector.

3.3 National Policy

3.3.1 Government White Paper – Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The Government White Paper entitled Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030, sets out a framework to guide Ireland’s energy policy development and actions that the Irish Government intends to take in the energy sector up to 2030 - also reaching out to 2050. The framework was developed in the context of the significant role played by European institutions in determining energy policy, markets, and regulation. Similarly, it takes account of European and international climate change objectives.

The Energy Vision 2050 established in the White Paper, describes a ‘*radical transformation*’ of Ireland’s energy system which, it is hoped, will result in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the energy sector reducing by between 80% and 95%, compared to 1990 levels. This means that the diversification of energy supply during the national transition to a renewable energy system will need to shift away from carbon-intensive fuels such as peat and coal in favour of lower carbon fuels like natural gas.

Project Response

The proposed development will allow for the discontinuation of coal at Moneypoint Generating Station in line with ESBs commitments and provide for continued operation of the facility using HFO to ensure the station can continue to provide additional stability and resilience to the wider energy network, particularly at times when demand is not being met by other power generators. In alignment with the above White Paper, the proposed transition to HFO will result in a 29% reduction in in GHG emissions during operational hours. This development is an initial step in ESBs commitments to transition the existing station to become a renewable energy hub, and this phased approach will allow continued security of supply during this transition.

3.3.2 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) was published in February 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040. It is a 20-year planning framework designed to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for Irish citizens, and to protect and enhance Ireland’s built and natural environment.

The NPF contains several National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) over various topics. NSOs 3, 6 and 8 support the strengthening of the economy, while NSOs 4,7 and 10 support providing quality access to public services. Achieving sustainable growth of settlements and management of environmental resources are supported by NSOs 1 and 9. None of the above mentioned

NSOs are achievable or sustainable without a secure and reliable electricity supply. Ireland's National Energy Policy is focussed on three pillars outlined in the NPF:

- Sustainability
- Security of Supply
- Competitiveness

To support the above outlined NSOs, the NPF also outlines a range National Planning Objectives (NPOs) to guide development and investment; of these NPOs, the following are considered to be of relevance of the proposed development:

NPO 41a Ensure that Ireland's coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality.

NPO 52 The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.

NPO 53 Support the circular and bio economy in particular through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.

NPO 54 Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

NPO 55 Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.

NPO 56 Sustainably manage waste generation, invest in different types of waste treatment and support circular economy principles, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, to support a healthy environment, economy and society.

Project Response

The proposed development will provide for the transition away from coal within the existing generating station, in turn assisting in responding to the supply-demand imbalance that is currently present as the electricity system moves increasingly to a low-carbon system. The proposed development will support NPOs 52 and 54, as it will ensure the transition towards a low carbon economy can be facilitated. In response to NPO 56, the proposed development includes provision for alterations to the existing Ash Storage Areas to utilise spare capacity to store the Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) by-product. This by-product can potentially be reclaimed for use when a viable and sustainable use has been identified.

In support of NSOs 53 and 55, the proposed development is located with the footprint of the existing Moneypoint Generating Station, reducing the need for greenfield development or development within lands which are in or adjacent to other land use zoning objectives. This maximises land use efficiencies within an appropriate location wherein there is an existing precedent of energy generation.

The proposed change in fuel type will not result in any overall increase in shipping movements (typically up to 24 ships per year as per current deliveries of coal) for the delivery of HFO which will continue to be delivered via shipping tankers, while distillate will continue to be delivered by road. It is important to note that Moneypoint will continue to comply with all environmental regulatory requirements to ensure the protection of the environment, and that ESB are a member of the Shannon Estuary Anti-Pollution Team (SEA-PT) providing a resource for

responses to a pollution event. ESB are committed to ensuring the environmental quality of the Shannon Estuary is managed and protected in accordance with NPO41a through its continuing compliance with its IE Licence and membership of the SEA-PT.

In addition, the proposed development will result in the removal of some coal processing structures (mobile stacker reclaimers and a coal conveyor bridge) and reduction in the overall height of the ASA landfill. These elements of the proposed development will result in a reduced impact on the physical character of the area than the existing scenario, which is also in accordance with NPO41a.

The proposal has also been subject to full environmental scrutiny and subject to several assessment and modelling exercises to ensure that it will operate within environmental limits and all relevant appropriate environmental legislation, this is aligned with NPOs 41a and 52.

3.3.3 National Development Plan 2021-2030

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) was published in October 2021 and sets out investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework, highlighting that “*Extensive efforts have been made to ensure that the NDP will support the Government’s climate ambitions*”. In the context of the energy sector, the NDP also highlights that “*The long-term objective is to transition to a net-zero carbon, reliable, secure, flexible and resource-efficient energy services at the least possible cost for society by mid-century*”.

The NDP acknowledges that ensuring every supply is secure is vital for the proper functioning of society and is considered “*a priority at national level and within the overarching EU policy framework in which our energy markets operate*”. In line with this, the NDP states that conventional electricity generation will be required to ensure supply is not affected when energy from variable generation (e.g., wind and solar) is not sufficient to meet demand. It is further stated that these generation assets will remain in reserve, and only operate when renewable energy sources cannot meet demand.

Project Response

The proposed development is considered to be aligned with the investment priorities of the NDP, as it will facilitate the continued safe, secure supply of energy, including at times when supply from renewable sources cannot meet the demand. The proposed development will also facilitate the transition away from the use of coal at Moneypoint Generating Station, as part of a wider ESB net zero strategy. The NDP further outlines that conventional generation capacity will continue to be needed to be delivered over the next decade to ensure reliability of supply. The proposed development directly aligns with this as it will continue to provide energy generation capacity at the existing Generating Station.

3.3.4 Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply

In November 2021, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications published the Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply. This statement sets out a number of updates to national policy in the context of the Programme for Government commitments relevant to the electricity sector, planning authorities and developers. The Statement also reiterates that “*ensuring continued security of electricity supply is considered a priority at national level within the overarching EU policy framework in which the electricity market operates*”.

The policy statement includes explicit Government approval (inter alia) that:

- The development of new conventional generation (including gas-fired and gasoil/distillate-fired generation) is a national priority and should be permitted and supported in order to

ensure security of electricity supply and support the growth of renewable electricity generation.

- It is appropriate that existing conventional electricity generation capacity should be retained until the new conventional electricity generation capacity is developed in order to ensure security of electricity supply.

The Policy Statement supports the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and EirGrid as they carry out their statutory roles to ensure security of electricity supply in Ireland. It provides clarity to investors and planning authorities that the Government fully supports the actions being taken by the CRU and EirGrid, including the need to develop new gas-fired generation capacity.

Project Response

The policy statement outlines that securing supply is a national priority, and recognises that conventional generation, like the proposed development, should be supported to ensure reliability. The proposed development will ensure the continued security of supply from an existing conventional energy supply facility for a limited and defined period, whilst continuing to meet the ESB's goals of ceasing the use of coal for same and facilitating a transition towards 'greener' energy production.

3.3.5 National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 and Draft National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2023

The National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NECP) incorporates all planned policies and measures identified up to the end of 2019 which collectively deliver a 30% reduction by 2030 in non-ETS (Emissions Trading System) greenhouse gas emissions (from 2005 levels) across the EU. In accordance with the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, a draft updated NECP was submitted to the European Commission in December 2023. It outlines our energy and climate policies in detail for the period from 2021 to 2030 and looks onwards to 2050. This draft will be further revised prior to final submission to the European Commission in June 2024. It is noted that the Draft Updated NECP text is unaltered (in comparison to the 2021-2030 NECP) in relation to its objectives on the phasing out of fossil fuels and oil dependency.

Within the NECP and Draft Updated NECP, the proposed development is specifically referenced under the heading 'Phasing Out Fossil Fuels' under policies and measures relating to renewable energy. The following is stated within both Plans in relation to the proposed development, *"Ireland has committed to end the burning of coal in ESB's Moneypoint generation plant by 2025 and to replace coal-fired generation with low-carbon and renewable technologies"*. The Draft Updated NECP having taking account of the Temporary Contract Mechanism for Moneypoint states *"it will be retained as a backup unit operating on HFO for several years until sufficient alternative plant is developed."*

The NECP and Draft Updated NECP both state that there is *"limited scope for reducing petroleum import dependency in the short to medium term"* as there is a lack of indigenous oil production within the Irish energy generation landscape.

In this context, the NECP outlines number of objectives for Ireland energy generation, including:

- Facilitate the continued operation of sufficient infrastructure to import and supply oil to the market place.
- Ensure, in the most cost-effective way, that there is sufficient flexibility in the energy system to maintain energy security of supply and facilitate the integration and transition to clean energy sources.

The above objectives are unchanged within the Draft Updated NECP.

In addition to the above outlined objectives, both Plans further outlines that as there is a national transition to increased reliance on low carbon energy sources, the network must remain secure and continue to provide supply if renewable sources cannot meet the demand.

Project Response

The proposed development aligns with the NECP and Draft Updated NECP as it will facilitate Moneypoint Generating Station to operate without the use of coal, in advance of the 2035 deadline for the cessation of energy generation from coal upon the island of Ireland. This will ensure the transition towards increased reliance on renewable energy will not be undermined by insecure supply, as the proposed development will ensure electricity can still be provided to the grid. This will allow Moneypoint to phase out the use of coal, in line with the ESB's commitment to do so and the targets provided for in both NECP reports, whilst facilitating the implementation of relatively minor works and structures at the existing facility to allow for HFO storage and use on site as the main energy generation fuel source until 2029. The provision for retaining Moneypoint as a 'backup generator' until sufficient alternative technologies, such as renewables, is developed, is stated within the Draft Updated NECP, and demonstrates the need for security of supply measures such as the proposed development to be available to the national grid.

3.3.6 National Energy Security Framework

The Government published the National Energy Security Framework in April 2022, responding to the State's energy security needs in the context of the war in Ukraine. The Framework outlines the structures which are in place within Government to monitor and manage national energy supplies. It sets out the plans which are in place to deal with energy security emergencies should they arise.

The Government's response to the impacts on the security of supply as a result of the war in Ukraine are based upon that of the European Union - phasing out fossil fuels sourced from Russia, whilst seeking to ensure security of energy supply. The national response is set out under three themes;

1. Managing the impact on consumers and businesses
2. Ensuring security of energy supply in the near term
3. Reducing our dependency on imported fossil fuel in the context of phasing out Russian energy imports across the EU

Coal as an energy resource in Ireland is based entirely on imports. The strategic importance of Moneypoint to the nation's electricity supply is therefore at risk when coal import markets such as Russia are no longer available. It is noted that ESB was required to source other import sources to facilitate the continued operation of Moneypoint Generating Station due to the ban on Russian coal imports. The transition to HFO from coal at Moneypoint provides greater security of supply as the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and the National Oil Reserves Agency Ireland will continue to work with industry to monitor the situation and, if appropriate, consider the release of strategic oil stocks (Response 12 of the Framework). The use of HFO at Moneypoint will provide, although for a limited period, a diversification of the fuel mix for electricity generation within the State. This will reduce the reliance on natural gas which is mainly sourced from the UK, with an increased reliance on this gas market source as the Corrib gas field declines; the use of HFO at Moneypoint will thus reduce the risk of security of electricity supply issues.

The Framework details the structures and governance in place with regards to preparation and implementation of emergency plans. It then details the Government's responses under each of the three themes amidst its decarbonisation plans and targets with the Climate Action Plan,

therefore a strong emphasis is placed on reducing fossil fuel demand and increasing renewable energy generation.

Project Response

Response 14 and 15 of the Framework relate to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, in conjunction with EirGrid, to review, develop and implement a programme of works for the security of electricity supply. This has been published by the CRU and is discussed in Section 3.6 of this report. Response 31 relates to a review of the security of electricity and gas supply which was published alongside Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 (discussed in Section 3.3.8 of this report).

There are no emergency plans directly related to coal within the Framework due to the phasing out of coal. However, oil supplies will be managed and monitored in the short and long term by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and the National Oil Reserves Agency, thus this will ensure the operation of the station is managed in line with the security of supply risk.

3.3.7 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan, which was originally published in 2019. CAP24 is the second statutory update to the climate action plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 commenced. This update builds on CAP23 and outlines how Ireland will accelerate the action required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development. CAP24 was approved by Government on 20 December 2023, subject to public consultation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (to be prepared in early 2024).

CAP24 acknowledges that the electricity sector faces immense challenges to meet the requirements set out under emission caps, while still meeting demand and delivering a flexible system that has the capacity to respond to fluctuations in supply. The electricity sector has been set with the smallest carbon budget of all sectors, with a ceiling of 40 MtCO₂eq for the first budget period 2021-2025. The remaining sectoral budget for 2023 to 2025 is 20.3 MtCO₂eq. The electricity sector key performance indicators (KPI's) for the years 2025 and 2030 are outlined under three themes to achieve carbon abatement targets:

- Accelerate Renewable Energy Generation
- Accelerate Flexibility
- Demand Management

In line with decreased carbon budgets, CAP has since 2019 stated that electricity generation from coal and peat must end. It is noted that the inaugural Climate Action Plan in 2019 committed to the closure of Moneypoint Generating Station in 2025 within its stated measures to phase out fossil fuels.

As an update to CAP23, there is a continuing emphasis on accelerating renewable energy production and supporting the associated transition of the electricity system in CAP24. It is noted under Action EL/24/17 (reproduced below), that a reduction in carbon emission from non-renewable generation is provided for under the 2025 key performance indicators. The proposed development will align with this action as existing coal-related carbon emissions will reduce due to the altered power-generating fuel type and operating hours proposed.

- EL/24/17 Reduce the minimum number of conventional synchronous generation units from eight to seven to facilitate higher levels of renewables on the system and a reduction in carbon emissions from non-renewable generation.

Project Response

The proposed development is ultimately a stepping-stone in ESB's transition to becoming a renewable energy generator at its Moneypoint site. The transition required at Moneypoint is representative of the changes across the energy sector on route to an 'electricity led system'. A phased approach to reducing and ending the use of fossil fuels in electricity generation is thus required to ensure continued security of supply. The proposed development will directly support the continued secure delivery of conventional generation to the grid.

The proposed development also represents an important measure for demand management, as it will ensure that it contributes to the continued supply of electricity during periods of increased demand. Additionally, the conversion to HFO will reduce the carbon emissions from the generating station which is a fundamental objective of CAP24.

The construction phase will also seek to reduce carbon emissions and will utilise less carbon intensive concrete products, where it is required. The delivery of a low carbon society is centred around the growth of electrification in other sectors which can only be achieved through a secure and reliable electricity supply.

The proposed development provides an important development which will support the acceleration of renewable energy and ultimately the phasing out of fossil fuels from the electricity sector to deliver the ambitions of CAP24.

Under CAP24 the enduring aim to meet sectoral targets is reiterated; the proposed development will assist in reducing carbon emissions from a non-renewable electricity generation development and is thus aligned with facilitating increased renewable energy generation whilst reducing its own operational carbon emissions.

3.3.8 Energy Security in Ireland to 2030

Published by the Government in November 2023, Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 outlines a new strategy to ensure energy security in Ireland for this decade, while ensuring a sustainable transition to a carbon neutral energy system by 2050. This report forms part of a wider Energy Security Package which aims to ensure energy is affordable, sustainable, and secure while also considering the risks to oil, natural gas, and electricity.

The report outlines that *"Ireland's current energy system presents several risks in ensuring uninterrupted availability of energy sources"*, and that these risks will evolve as the energy system transitions to a renewables-based system. These include risks to supply, sudden increase in demand, under delivery of targets, attack and cyber security risks, climate change and investment.

In the context of the above, the strategy acknowledges that *"Ireland is currently one of the most energy import dependent countries in the EU, having imported 77% of its energy supply in 2021, and 82% in 2022."* As Ireland transitions towards a low carbon energy system, it is noted that this dependency will decrease therefore decreasing vulnerability to energy shocks. In this regard, the strategy outlines three energy objectives:

- Sustainable
- Secure
- Affordable

To achieve these objectives, the strategy outlines several actions. Those with relevance to the proposed development are provided below:

Action 7: To work within the updated European Electricity Market Design to continue to reduce emissions associated with Ireland's conventional capacity over the medium-term

This action outlines that Ireland is transitioning to incorporating large volumes of variable renewables into the energy system, but in recent years Ireland has seen the critical importance of this “back-up” capacity – in particular in ensuring uninterrupted supplies of electricity to homes and businesses during periods of low wind or low sun. Ensuring supply in these conditions is an important component of energy security but also an “*important measure in building confidence in Ireland’s ability to securely transition to a majority renewable system.*” In this regard, the strategy reiterates existing policy to phase out coal and peat.

Action 8: To complete implementation of the CRU Security of Electricity Supply Programme

This action outlines the strategies support for the CRUs Security of Electricity Supply Programme, which provides a number of actions including

- The procurement of Temporary Emergency Generation capacity to ensure there are units of last resort available to the State in an emergency.
- The retention of older generating units on a temporary basis until new, enduring capacity is delivered
- Measures to improve the performance and availability of existing generators and demand-side units, and the development of additional demand-side responses.

Action 12: To accelerate delivery of power system flexibility

This action outlines that ensuring the power system is flexible is essential to secure transition to a low carbon system.

Action 19: To resolve long-term sourcing issues for improved oil security.

This action acknowledges that Ireland relies heavily on imports to meet its oil requirements as it does not produce crude oil and is a net-importer of refined products. Under this action, the strategy outlines that additional measures for oil include assessing the long-term sourcing issues regarding oil and strengthen the supply chain of secondary fuels for gas-fired power generation.

Project Response

The proposed development is aligned with the aim of the Energy Security package as it will assist in mitigating against the risks to supply as outlined within the document.

In line with Action 7, the proposed development will facilitate the cessation of coal burning for power generation at Moneypoint. The use of HFO instead of coal at Moneypoint is equivalent to 29% lower greenhouse gas emissions during operational hours. The Energy Security Package outlines that securing supply in periods of low renewable capacity is essential to security of the energy system.

In response to Action 8 and 12, the proposed development will ensure that the existing Moneypoint Generating Station can continue to operate and provide supply to the energy grid until the appropriate renewable energy generation and storage infrastructure is in place.

It is also worth noting that the Annex of Actions lists oil resilience (Action 19), in the context of ensuring oil reserves exist, when required, and providing supplies into the future. Therefore, oil resilience is critical to the proposed amended ‘operational profile’ of Moneypoint Generating Station, which will operate on [heavy fuel] oil for limited periods. The inclusion of oil resiliency actions, highlights that oil is identified and acknowledged as a fuel source which is important in ensuring that security of supply is effectively managed. Oil is ultimately a fuel source only utilised when necessary, as is the case with the proposed development, which will operate as a ‘last resort’ electricity generator.

3.4 Regional Policy

3.4.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan and investment framework published to shape future growth and better manage regional planning and economic development throughout the Southern Region (which includes County Clare) to the year 2030. The RSES identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and outlines Regional Policy Objectives to manage the spatial planning in the region.

The RSES acknowledges that the provision of secure energy supply is vital to ensure the region can maintain sustainable growth. The RSES recognises that Moneypoint is an energy generating station of national and regional importance, as it has the capacity to produce 25% of the national energy requirement. In this regard, the RSES also supports Moneypoint's transition away from burning fossil fuels by 2025. In the wider context of every generation, the RSES is aligned with the transition towards a low carbon economy, which will include capitalising on renewable energy resources and promoting a circular economy.

Within the wider context of electricity generation, the RSES outlines the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs):

RPO 56 Low Carbon Economy (a) The RSES recognises the urgency to transition to a low carbon future and it is therefore an objective to accelerate the transition towards low carbon economy and circular economy through mechanisms such as the Climate Action Competitive Fund.

RPO 87 Low Carbon Energy Future The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.

RPO 97 Power Stations and Renewable Energy It is an objective to support the sustainable technology upgrading and conversion of power stations in the Region to increase capacity for use of energy efficient and renewable energy sources.

RPO 219 New Energy Infrastructure It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.

Project Response

The RSES acknowledges that having a reliable, safe and secure energy system is vital to the sustained growth of the region, and the proposed development will ensure that supply can remain unimpacted when there are fluctuations in supply. Furthermore, support for Moneypoint's transition away from the use of fossil fuels by 2025, is explicitly supported within the RSES through RPO 97. The proposed development is part of the wider transition away from the use of coal at the generating station and will allow for a reduction in carbon emissions.

The proposed development will support the above outlined RPOs, including RPO 56 and 87, as the proposed transition to HFO will facilitate the use of a lower carbon form of energy generation than coal, for a temporary and defined period, to ensure the continuity and security of electricity supply. Furthermore, the proposed development is part of a wider project to cease the use of

coal at Moneypoint Generating Station. The cessation of coal usage and conversion to HFO will allow the Station to continue to operate and ensure energy demands can be met in an efficient manner, in accordance with the provisions of RPO 219.

3.5 Local Policy

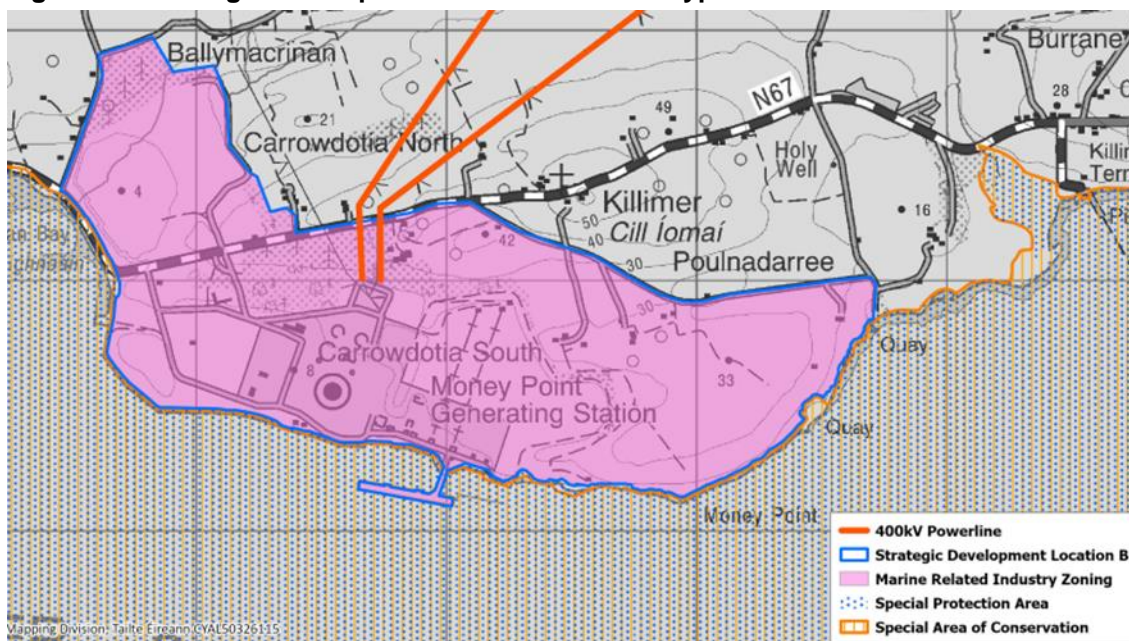
3.5.1 Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The proposed development is located within the functional area of Clare County Council and is therefore subject to the planning policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (CCDP), which was formally adopted on 20 April 2023. The CCDP was prepared to guide development in and across the county, and “seeks to develop and improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets and quality of life of the county”.

The CCDP outlines that Moneypoint Generating Station is one of Ireland’s largest electricity stations and has the capacity to meet 25% of Ireland’s electricity demand. In this regard, it is also outlined that Moneypoint is a significant driver in the local economy and Clare County Council supports the “on-going diversification and expansion of the site”.

The CCDP states its support for ESB’s commitment to transition the existing Moneypoint Generating Station from a fossil fuel burning power generation station to a green energy hub, and the safeguarding of future operations on the site. In this regard, the CCDP also outlines that any development of Moneypoint must ensure that the “environmental integrity of the adjacent Shannon Estuary is maintained”. It is also noted that Moneypoint Generating Station is an Upper Tier SEVESO site, and it is therefore noted that any planning application within this site will be subject to advice from the Health and Safety Authority. To further support this, the CCDP outlines the following specific objectives for Moneypoint Generating Station and the Moneypoint Strategic Development Location (SDL), at which the generation station is situated (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint



Source: Clare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029, Map 12B Strategic Development Location B

Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint CDP12.6 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To safeguard the role and function of Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint as a key strategic driver of economic growth in the country, facilitating its sustainable growth, operational expansion and diversification, in accordance with national and regional energy objectives.
- b) To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub and the development of the Shannon Estuary as a focal point for the offshore wind industry in Europe.
- c) To support and facilitate the development of marine related industry on lands adjacent to Moneypoint which is compatible with the primary use of the SDL as a Strategic Energy Location.
- d) To ensure that all proposed developments will be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EC Directives.
- e) To ensure that all proposed development at Strategic Development Location B shall incorporate the Mitigation Measures as contained in the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary (Volume 9 of this plan) for ensuring the integrity of the Natura 2000 Network

Section 6.2.4 of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary outlines that mitigation measures can be divided into measures that:

- Avoid the identified potential effects – which generally entail removing Plan objectives that have an impact on the environment.
- Reduce the magnitude, extent, probability or severity of potential effects – which commonly entails rewording of the Plan objectives.
- Offset effects after they have occurred – which entail devising positive measures to compensate for biodiversity impacts deriving from unavoidable actions (this is often the case in light of a statement of case for IROPI). This option is considered, to some extent, a remedial action.

It further outlines the following table of mitigation measures within Table 11.2 of the SEA Environmental Report, and outlines that these measures are *“the arching mitigation measures arising from the SEA process which must be adhered to prior to or during the development of any Strategic Development Location or Area of Opportunity.”*

Strategic Development Locations CDP12.4 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To safeguard the roles and functions of the Strategic Development Locations, which are identified on Map 12A and Map 12B at the end of this chapter and in the SIFP (Volume 9 of this plan); and
- b) To support economic development by encouraging the sustainable growth, development and appropriate diversification of Strategic Development Locations; All proposed developments shall be in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EC Directives.

Energy Security CDP11.44 It is an objective of Clare County Council: To promote and facilitate the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure, to integrate renewable energy sources, thereby creating a secure and efficient energy supply and storage system for County Clare which is ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.

Power Stations and Renewable Energy CDP11.50 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To support the sustainable technology upgrading and conversion of power stations in the County including Moneypoint to the use of energy efficient and renewable energy sources; and
- b) To support the redevelopment of the Moneypoint power generation station site as a green energy hub subject to the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directive, Water Framework Directive, and all other relevant EU Directives.

In addition to policies and objectives specific to energy infrastructure, the CCDP outlines provisions for the management of landscapes and views. In this regard, the proposed development is located within the Shannon Estuary Working Landscape, (which extends from Moneypoint to Ballynacragga Point, excluding Clonderalaw Bay). In the context of the proposed development's strategic location on the Shannon Estuary, visual pollution and disturbance is an important factor that needs to be considered. The following policies and objectives have been outlined within the CCDP to provide for the appropriate management of any visual impacts that may arise from development in this location:

SEVESO III Directive CDP11.43 It is an objective of Clare County Council: To control the following for the purposes of reducing the risk or limiting the consequences of a major accident (regard will be had to the provisions of the SEVESO III Directive and any regulations, under any enactment, giving effect to that Directive):

- The siting of Major Accident Hazard sites;
- The modification of an existing Major Accident Hazard site; or
- Specified development in the vicinity of a Major Accident Hazard site.

In addition to objectives specially outlined for Moneypoint, the CCDP also provides a number of policies and objectives for the energy sector, and for any development occurring within the county. The CCDP outlines that having a secure energy supply is vital to ensure Clare can develop in a sustainable manner, but in a way that does not compromise environmental quality. Further to this, the CCDP is aligned with the wider national commitment to increase the use of renewable energy and transition away from carbon intensive fuels. In this regard, the following objectives are considered to be relevant to the proposed development.

Flood Risk Assessment and Management CDP2.6 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To ensure development proposals have regard to the requirements of the SFRA and Flood Risk Management Guidelines; and where required are supported by an appropriately detailed hydrological assessment / flood risk assessment.
- b) To ensure that flood risk assessments include consideration of potential impacts of flooding arising from climate change including sea level rise and coastal erosion.
- c) To integrate sustainable water management solutions, prioritising nature based solutions (such as SUDS, nonporous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals.
- d) To include Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRMS) where appropriate in consultation with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and other relevant stakeholders.
- e) To support investment in the sustainable development of capital works under the Flood Capital Investment Programme and Flood Risk Management Plans developed under the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) process.
- f) To ensure that potential future flood information obtained/generated through the Development Management process is used to inform suitable adaptation requirements in line with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Flood Risk Management (DoECLG & OPW, 2009).

Flood Relief Schemes CDP2.10 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

b) To require that all infrastructure and energy providers/operators provide for adaptation measures to protect strategic infrastructure (including roads, railways, ports and energy infrastructure) from increased flood risk associated with climate change.

Shannon Estuary Working Landscape CDP14.4 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

a) To permit development in these areas that will sustain economic activity of regional and national significance – especially through the protection of resources to sustain large-scale energy projects, logistics, large-scale manufacturing and associated infrastructure. All such developments shall be required to conform to relevant management and conservation objectives for designated and protected habitats and species within the estuary;

b) To ensure that selection of appropriate sites in the first instance within this landscape, together with consideration of the details of siting and design, are directed towards reducing visual impact and that residual visual impacts are minimised;

c) To ensure that particular regard be had to avoiding intrusions on scenic routes and on ridges or shorelines;

d) To ensure that developments in these areas be required to demonstrate:

i. That sites have been selected to avoid visually prominence wherever feasible

ii. That site layouts avail of existing topography and vegetation to reduce visibility from scenic routes, walking trails, public amenities and roads;

iii. That design for buildings and structures reduces visual impact through careful choice of form, finish and colours and that any site works seek to reduce visual impact of the development.

Seascape Character Areas CDP14.6 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

a) To require that it be demonstrated that every effort has been made to visually integrate any proposed development within a Seascape Character area. This must be demonstrated by assessing the proposal in relation to:

- Views from land to sea
- Views from sea to land
- Views along the coastline

b) To ensure that appropriate standards of location, siting, design, finishing and landscaping are achieved.

Project Response

The CCDP outlines its support for the ongoing operation, diversification and expansion of Moneypoint Generating Station, and ESB's commitment to transition the station from fossil fuels to low carbon energy. The proposed development will introduce the first step of this transition, as it will facilitate the cessation of coal burning for energy generation at the station, thus facilitating the use of a lower carbon form of energy generation, for a temporary and defined period to the end of 2029, to ensure the continuity and security of electricity supply to the national grid.

The proposed development aligns with the CCDP's specific objectives for the 'Moneypoint Strategic Development Location' area, wherein which the proposed development is located. The proposed use of HFO for energy generation (and associated minor works/ structures), will assist in facilitating the continued operation and significant employment and economic generation

functions of the existing station (in accordance with CDP14.4), whilst aiding its future progress of its overall transition towards a green energy hub in the area. The proposed development will rely on the Shannon Estuary as a means of transporting HFO to the site, utilising the same shipping corridor in the Shannon Estuary as per current coal deliveries. In support of objective CDP12.14, the proposed development will allow for the continued operation of Moneypoint Generating Station, which is outlined as Strategic Development Location B within the CCDP. The conversion from coal to HFO will ensure that the station can continue to operate after the use of coal is discontinued, in line with ESB commitments.

In support of Objective CDP11.44 and 11.50, the proposed development is an initial step in Moneypoint's transition to becoming a Green Energy Hub, and the conversion to HFO will allow for the continued operation of the station in a limited capacity to provide additional stability to the wider energy system. The proposed development has been designed in accordance with all relevant directives, as outlined within the accompanying EIAR.

The proposed development is and will continue to be classified as a SEVESO site and will continue to be subject to the requirements of the SEVESO III Directive as per its Industrial Emissions (IE) Licence. The environmental management system for Moneypoint will be updated as part of a required amendment of the industrial emissions licence. The proposed development is thus in accordance with objective CDP11.43.

A flood risk assessment has been prepared as part of the planning application and has concluded that the proposed development is not at risk of flooding, nor does it present a risk of flooding to other areas. This is compliant with objective CDP2.6 and CDP2.10.

A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) has been prepared which states that no mitigation is required as the landscape and visual effects are no greater than imperceptible. The proposed development extends the current land use – electricity generation, and thus the proposed new structures are of a similar type, and are partially concealed by existing structures, the proposed development will also result in the removal of existing structures and the reprofiling of the ASA landfill to provide an overall reduction in height. The LVIA complies with objective CDP14.4 and CDP14.6 to demonstrate the minimisation of visual impacts.

3.5.1.1 West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plan

The West Clare Municipal District Settlement Plan (WCMDSP) (Volume 3D of the CCDP) provides further direction for development within West Clare and is intended to support the provisions on the CCDP (relevant sections to the proposed development are highlighted within Section 3.5.1 of this report). The West Clare municipal district covers the largest portion of the county, *“stretching from the Loop Head peninsula, north along the Atlantic coast as far as Ballyvaughan and New Quay and south along the Shannon Estuary as far as Tiernaclane and Islandavanna on the outskirts of Ennis.”*

The WCMDSP outlines that Moneypoint will *“continue to play a key role in the energy requirements of the country as Ireland moves towards a low carbon economy”*. It is also acknowledged that Moneypoint Generating Station is vital to the economic prosperity of the nearby town of Kilrush. The WCMDSP further notes that as Moneypoint is of economic importance to the wider area, plans to transition to a green energy hub after coal burning ceases in 2025, are welcomed.

In the context of the future transformation of the Moneypoint site to a Green Energy Hub, there is an emphasis within the WCMDSP on the requirement for the readiness and availability of a trained workforce. The transformation to an offshore wind hub at Moneypoint provides a unique economic opportunity constructing and servicing a multi-billion euro offshore wind industry, which will provide continued economic growth of Kilrush and the surrounding area. In anticipation of this transition, the MCMDSP notes that funding has been secured for the

development of Maritime Excellence Centre outside Kilrush to beginning the upskilling of the local workforce.

Project Response

The WCMDSP acknowledges that Moneypoint Generating Station is a key economic driver in the area, and that the redevelopment of the site will be supported. The proposed development will allow for the continued operation of the station after the use of coal is phased out in line with ESBs commitment to do so in 2025. Continued use of the existing power generating station, through the temporary conversion and use for and by HFO, will ensure the generating station remains an economic driver and provider in the area during a transitional period to 2029 and continue to facilitate future growth as well as national energy security as requested by EirGrid.

3.5.1.2 Draft Clare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029

Clare County Council's Draft Climate Action Plan (DCAP) was published in October 2023 and public consultation concluded on 23 November 2023. The DCAP sets out 87 climate actions across five areas; Governance and leadership, built environment, transportation, communities and partnerships, and the natural environment. The DCAP outlines that climate action is a collective responsibility and will involve the input of public bodies, local communities, and businesses.

A core element of the DCAP is supporting a just transition to a low carbon society, and the plan outlines that "*Clare County Council are committed to working with partners and communities to support a just transition that results in a greener, healthier and more prosperous future for the residents of Clare*". The DCAP further acknowledges that Clare County Council must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 in accordance with prescribed national targets.

To achieve this reduction, the DCAP has set out a number of objectives and corresponding actions. Outlined below are those considered to be of relevance to the proposed development:

Objective BE2 Ensure the integration of climate action in spatial planning to enable County Clare to transition to a low carbon and resilient society.

Action BE2.1 Support the development of renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary facilities in order to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets through planning policy and land use objectives.

Project Response

Whilst the proposed development will not eradicate emissions from the existing Moneypoint Generating Station, the conversion from coal to HFO will decrease current emission levels of the station in accordance with the broad principles of objective BE2. In addition, the proposed development will have limited operational hours and defined period to the end of 2029 to ensure continued national security of supply. The proposed development thus also accords with Action BE2.1 as it is a development which is designed to operate on limited hours to support the energy system and maintain supply during times of increased demand or when there is a generation capacity deficit. The proposed development supports renewable energy projects and thus helps to work towards the achievement of carbon limits set within national policy (i.e CAP23 and draft CAP24).

3.6 Sectoral Policy

3.6.1 ESB Strategy 2040- Driven to Make a Difference: Net Zero by 2040

Strategy 2040 builds upon ESB's 2017 Brighter Future Strategy and provides a strategy toward achieving net zero by 2040. The strategy was developed in line with ESBs Strategy Framework

to ensure consistency across the organisation and sets a target of net zero emissions by 2040. The strategy outlines three strategic objectives, which are core to achieving this net zero target:

- **Decarbonised Electricity:** Develop and connect renewables to decarbonise the electricity system by 2040
- **Resilient Infrastructure:** Provide resilient infrastructure for a reliable low carbon electricity system
- **Empowered Customers:** Empower, enable and support customers and communities to achieve net zero

Project Response

Strategy 2040 underscores ESB's commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2040, which is core to the ESB's commitment to cease using coal for energy production at Moneypoint by 2025. The proposed development provides for alterations to the operational regime of the existing power generation facility, away from coal to HFO. This transition will assist in providing a mechanism for continuance of use of existing facilities and infrastructure, thus providing and ensuring resilience in the system which is at a lower emission rate than the current regime.

3.6.2 All Island Generation Capacity Statement 2023-2032

The latest All-Island Generation Capacity Statement published by EirGrid and SONI (System Operator Northern Ireland) outlines the expected electricity demand capacity required over a period of ten years. The Statement predicts that through to 2032 the outlook will be challenging.

The modelled scenarios for Moneypoint Generating Station are based on operations ending in October 2024 due to the issuing of a closure notice by ESB. The CRU are ultimately responsible for security of supply, as such, the Capacity Statement does not take account of the Services Agreement for Moneypoint Security of Supply project for the period to the end of 2029. The modelled median and high scenarios predict that capacity deficits will occur during all scenarios and all years to 2032. This has been attributed to the reduced availability of power plants, changes in consumer demand through the increased use of electric vehicles and electric heat pumps, and in future years, increased numbers of renewable energy connections. The modelled low scenario is forecast to meet the adequacy standard for 2028 to 2030.

The modelled scenarios for Moneypoint Generating Station are based on operations ending in October 2024. The Capacity Statement notes that new electricity generation will be required to meet the increasing demand for energy while maintaining security of supply. In effect, the Statement also highlights that in order to prepare for this change, EirGrid and SONI must make the electricity grid stronger and more flexible. The scale of the changes over the next decade will require significant new grid infrastructure to provide the flexibility in the electricity system.

Project Response

The Capacity Statement examines the balance between electricity demand and supply for the period to 2032 but does not provide solutions to any identified deficits. The Capacity Statement has predicted supply deficits in each year to 2032 without Moneypoint Generating Station in operation. The Capacity Statement provides a technical basis for the project's need for continued generation of electricity at Moneypoint to ensure capacity shortfalls do not occur.

3.6.3 Electricity Security of Supply Programme of Actions

The Programme of Actions was published by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) in September 2021, in tandem with the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement 2021, and outlines a number of actions aimed at addressing the deficits outlined within the Capacity Statement.

The Programme of Actions acknowledges, in line with the Capacity Statement, that there will be a risk in supply over the forthcoming years up to 2025/26, particularly during the winter periods. Additional risk factors have also been identified, such as a continued increase in electricity demand and a decline in overall generation, resulting in approximately 260MW of shortfall in 2022/23, rising to 1050MW in 2023/34 and 1850MW in 2024/25. In order to address the shortfall, the CRU has put together a core programme of actions to deliver at least 2000MW of additional capacity.

While a number of these actions relate to gas fired generation, the actions also include *Extended operation of Older Generators (up to 1200MW)* (Action 3), which outlines that the closure of older generating station will give rise to significant risks to the security of the electricity system until sufficient capacity is established. In this regard, it is noted that as older generation units are likely to be carbon intensive, it is envisaged that these types of generation will be used only to support the system at insecure times.

After a review of the programme in early 2023, there was recognition that the scope and focus of the programme had shifted from planning, policy, and commercial engagement towards delivery of generation and demand initiatives. Progress on the reconfigured workstreams (A) System Operations, (B) Demand Initiatives and (C) Delivery. Within the October 2023 update the following is stated in relation to Moneypoint under the delivery workstream –

“The Retention of Existing Units (REU) workstream falls under the remit of Delivery. Its target is to extend the availability for operation of a number of older generation units, on a temporary basis, until new capacity has been delivered to replace them through the Capacity Remuneration Mechanism (CRM). EirGrid engaged with several operators concerning the feasibility of retaining in service a number of generation units in this context. The outcome of this action saw EirGrid cease engagement with a number of units where they continue to participate in the market and will remain in operation; a number proceeded to closure; and specific contractual arrangements were entered into with one party. In this regard, in August 2023, following Direction from the CRU, EirGrid entered into a Services Agreement with ESB for the continued availability of the three (3) units at Moneypoint after their planned closure date for the provision of Security of Supply services on an out of market and temporary basis”.

Under the Programme of Actions, an information paper titled “Security of Electricity Supply – Retention of Moneypoint Units (MP1, MP2 & MP3)” was published on 17 October 2023. This information paper was prepared to provide transparency to the public and market participants in relation to the service agreement. The paper details how the agreement ensures the achievement of the objectives of CRU17346 (Regulatory Approach to Maintaining Local Security of Supply in Electricity) on managing generation exit in the context of security of supply. The paper concludes that the agreement in regard to Moneypoint will reduce risks to the security of electricity supply, while protecting customers and minimising market distortion. The paper also indicates that a capacity contract from 01 October 2024 to 30 June 2025 is currently being explored to allow operation of the generating units, under a Capacity Remuneration Mechanism auction, for the 2024/2025 period.

Project Response

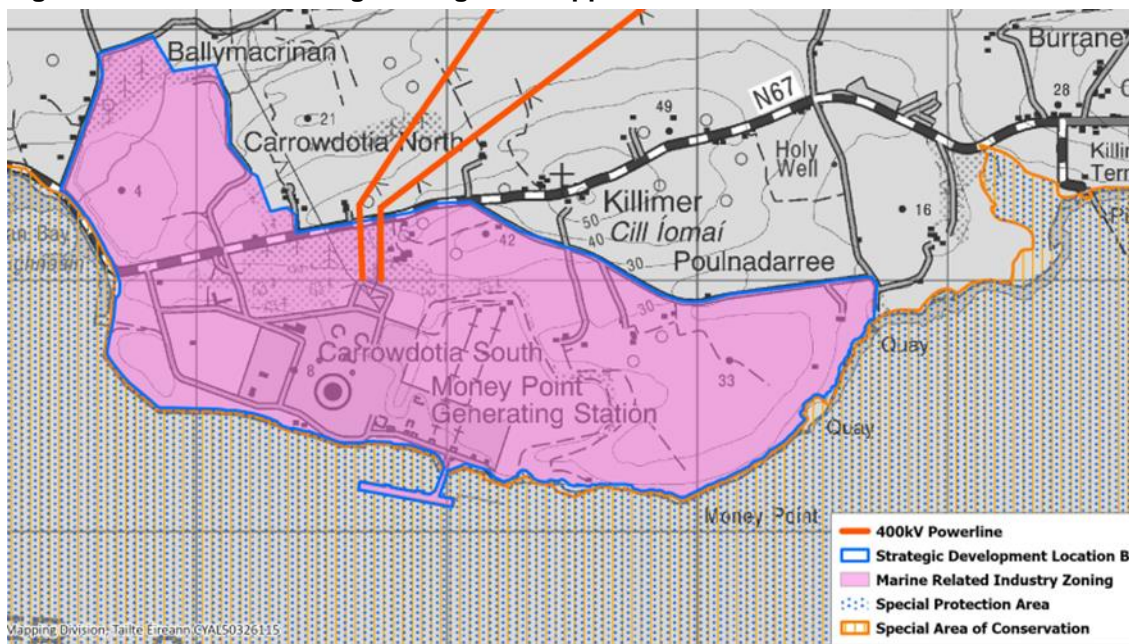
The proposed development is in direct alignment with the CRU Programme of Actions and ensuring the continued availability of power from Moneypoint. The Programme of Actions ensures that the existing Moneypoint Generating Station can continue to operate and supply electricity to the grid and act in a ‘Security of Supply’ capacity. The introduction of HFO as a fuel source to Moneypoint will allow it to operate as needed until 2029, for a temporary and defined period to ensure national security of energy supply, whilst permitting the ESB to meet its commitment to cease the use of coal for power generation in line with both ESB and national energy policies.

The continued operation of older generation units is outlined within and supported by the Programme of Actions, as being vital to mitigate against the risks to the security of supply that have been identified.

3.7 Land Use Zoning

The proposed development is within the boundary of the existing Moneypoint Generating Station, located in Carrowdotia South, Carrowdotia North, Ballymacarin, Killimer, Kilrush, Co. Clare. Moneypoint Generating Station is located within Strategic Development Location B – Moneypoint and has been zoned for ‘Marine-Related Industry’ as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Land Use Zoning relating to the application site



Source: Clare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029, Map 12B Strategic Development Location B

The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with the ‘Marine-Related Industry’ zoning as detailed herein, on the basis that;

- It is development which will continue to rely on marine transport for the delivery of HFO to supply Moneypoint Generating Station.
- It is the continuation of an existing type of development which has been consented and operational for over 35 years.
- It supports the strategic development objectives at Moneypoint Strategic Development Zone as a Strategic Energy Location.

There are specific objectives which relate to the site, and these have been outlined earlier in Section 3.5.1 of this Planning Report.

In addition to the specific objectives outlined for Strategic Development Location B, Chapter 19 *Land Use and Zonings* of the CCDP identify that the ‘Marine-Related Industry’ zoning objective seeks to:

“Provide for marine-related industry and large-scale uses that create a synergy with the marine use. Marine-related industry shall be taken to include the use of land for industry that, by its nature, requires a location adjacent to estuarine/deep water including a

dependency on marine transport, transshipment, bulk cargo or where the industrial processes benefit from a location adjacent to the marine area”.

The indicative land use zoning matrix within Appendix 2 of the CCDP outlines the land uses that may be permissible for ‘Marine-Related Industry’ zoning. It is noted within the matrix that there are no ‘Permitted in Principle’ development types listed. Notwithstanding the absence of permitted development types, uses that are applicable which are noted as being ‘Open for Consideration’ in the zoning objective, include ‘industry’ and ‘CHP/Waste to energy facilities’, although no definition is provided for the latter use. ‘Industry’ is defined as:

*“**Industry:** The use of land for industry uses shall be taken to include the use for industrial processing or manufacturing of a scale and nature where there is significant goods manufacturing and related uses. Uses of this nature may result in the generation of emissions. This type of industrial activity may also be subject to the SEVESO Directives, the main EU legislation dealing with the control of on-shore major accident hazards involving dangerous substances. A mix of uses such as office-based or retail development is not considered appropriate in areas zoned for industrial development.”*

The CCDP states further, that where uses are not listed, they will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and compliance with the relevant policies and objectives, standards and requirements, as set out in the CCDP.

The proposed development will retain its current/ existing status quo, in so far as Moneypoint Generating Station will continue to generate electricity and provide employment, albeit via a new fuel supply. The use of the facility as an electricity/ power generating station is an established use since the station’s commenced operation in 1985. The proposed development is considered to be aligned with the existing industrial use and zoning of the site, in accordance with the provisions of the CCDP.

4 Planning History

4.1 Introduction

Energy generation has been an established use on the site, dating back to 1985 when Moneypoint Generating Station was initially commissioned. In this chapter, a detailed planning history of the site is outlined, as well as other historically consented development within the surrounding environment in order to identify any developments that may either complement, or be incompatible with, the proposed development. The planning history also identifies other consented projects or future projects within the surrounding environs which may overlap, interact or result in potential cumulative impacts with the proposed development.

4.2 Planning History of Moneypoint Generating Station

A complete planning history of granted applications on the proposed application site was conducted initially in October 2023 and reviewed and updated until prior to submission of the planning application (January 2024), as represented in Table 4.1. These applications relate to Section 34 applications to Clare County Council and Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) applications, including those comprising electricity transmission applications (Section 182A applications) to An Bord Pleanála.

Table 4.1: Planning History of Application Site

Planning Reference	Development Description	Date Granted/ Approved
P813759	To erect an electricity generating station & ancillary works	13/03/1979
P823179	To retain the construction quay and change of use of part of the coal store to allow screening and grading of coal and transport of coal by water	13/06/1986
P822368	To change use of part of the coal store to allow screening and grading of coal and transport of coal from the site by road.	18/06/1987
P824408	To construct a reception building, security building and car park	
P827018	To change use of part of the ash handling facility to allow transport of ash from the site by road for sale in bulk	29/01/1990
911102	Permission to construct single storey security building and stores	29/01/1992
92777	Permission to construct single storey extension to existing administration building.	30/09/1992
93860	Permission for an administration block extension (above existing single storey building) at Moneypoint Generating System	12/05/1994
93659	To construct a Conveyor Housing and Vehicle Building	20/09/1993
99797	To construct an Ash Beneficiation Process Plant, ash storage silos, compressor building, access roadway	03/06/1999
991390	Erection of a 40m anemometer mast	10/11/1999
011538	Wind Energy Project. - nine wind turbines, each having a rated electrical output of up to 2,500 kW	18/10/2002
03625	An Environmental Retrofit Project, the project will abate emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO ₂) and oxides of nitrogen (NO _x) to comply with the conditions of the station's Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) Licence	25/02/2004
06935	Construction of a new canteen building	22/07/2006
072701	Construct a Mechanical and Electrical Workshop Building	09/02/2008

Planning Reference	Development Description	Date Granted/ Approved
081849	Erect a 30 metre high, free standing lattice type communication structure, carrying antennae and communication dishes to provide for future third party co-location	13/03/2009
11457	A new indoor Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) 400 kV substation; A new indoor Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) 220 kV substation; A new indoor Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) 110 kV substation; and associated transmission infrastructure connections	03/09/2011
1274 / ABP: PL03.241624	10 year planning permission for a Wind Farm Project at Moneypoint Generating Station. The development will consist of five wind turbines each having a rated electricity output of approximately 3,000 kW	Appeal granted with conditions - 12/12/2013
14373 ABP: 243842	20 year planning permission for development to the existing 32 hectare ash repository site located within the Moneypoint generating station complex. The development will take place within the footprint of the existing repository and comprises an increase in the height to a proposed maximum level above ordnance datum of 28.4m OD. This will accommodate 1.8 million cubic meters of additional material deposition.	Appeal granted with conditions – 29/01/2015
1581	The development will comprise an electrical transformer station consisting of two single-storey buildings with associated outdoor electrical equipment. The proposed development is an amendment to the previously approved electrical transformer station at Moneypoint Wind Farm (CC Ref: 12-74 APB Ref: PL03.241624)	10/05/2015
19746	10 year permission for the development of a 300 to 400 MVA (electrical rating) synchronous condenser.	21/12/2019
20318	Development up to 400 MVA (electrical rating) synchronous condenser which shares the existing 400 KV/17 kV transformer and 400kV underground cable belonging to the existing coal fired unit 2. Planning permission is being sought for a duration of 10 years. This application represents a relocation within Moneypoint of a similar application permitted by Clare County Council under Reg. Ref. P19/746.	16/08/2020
ABP-307798-20	Proposed 400 kV electricity transmission cables, extension to the existing Kilpaddoge Electrical Substation and associated works, between the existing Moneypoint 400kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Carrowdoita South County Clare and existing Kilpaddoge 220/110kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Kilpaddoge County Kerry.	04/06/2021
2332	The development, which will be located at various locations within the station complex, will consist of land-based site Investigation (SI) works comprising of boreholes and trial pits across the site	18/04/2023
ABP-312734-22	Fabrication facility for the construction and assembly of floating offshore wind turbines	Pre-application consultation – lodged 14 February 2022

In relation to the above, a review of the conditions relating to the planning history of the proposed site, highlights that the original permission for Moneypoint Generating Station (Planning Reference: P813759) includes the following condition:

Condition 1.1 - The fuel source shall be coal. In exceptional circumstances, e.g, failure of a coal mill, the temporary utilisation of residual oil in combination with coal shall be permitted. The use of any other fuel source shall not be permitted except with approval under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts, 1963 and 1976, which shall be the subject of a separate planning application.

The subject planning application is thus being lodged in accordance with Condition 1.1 of P813759, as well as in accordance with the direction provided by the ABP, by letter dated 17 November 2023, advising the ESB that following consultations, the Board “*is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of paragraphs 37A(2)(a), (b) and (c) of the Act*

(and that) accordingly, the Board has decided that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Any application for permission for the proposed development must, therefore, be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 37E of the Act.

4.3 Planning History in Respect of Relevant Development

Table 4.2 outlines various developments granted permission over the last ten years within a ten-kilometre radius of Moneypoint Generating Station. These developments comprise of applications made to An Bord Pleanála and to the relevant local authorities.

Table 4.2: Planning History of surrounding relevant development

Planning reference	Development Description	Date Granted/ Approved
Clare County Council Administrative Area		
19746	10 year permission for development of a 300-400 MVA (electrical rating) synchronous condenser.	20/11/2019
20318	Development up to 400 MVA (electrical rating) synchronous condenser which shares the existing 400 KV/17 kV transformer and 400kV underground cable belonging to the existing coal fired unit 2. Planning permission is being sought for a duration of 10 years. This application represents a relocation within Moneypoint of a similar application permitted by Clare County Council under Reg. Ref. P19/746.	16/07/2020
ABP-307798- 20	Proposed 400kV electricity transmission cables, extension to the existing Kilpaddoge Electrical Substation and associated works, between the existing Moneypoint 400kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Carrowdoita South County Clare and existing Kilpaddoge 220/110kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Kilpaddoge County Kerry.	04/06/2021
23195	An extension of the existing Kilkerin Point 220 kV Line Cable Interface Mast (LCIM) compound/A new fibre optic cable measuring an approximate length of 8.9km routed between Kilkerin Point LCIM compound (townland of Lakyle North) and Prospect 220 kV substation (townland of Ballygeery West)	Decision made: 13/12/2023 - awaiting notification of final decision
Kerry County Council Administrative Area		
13138	Construct an electricity peaker power generating plant, consisting of 52no. diesel reciprocating engines in acoustic containers, including an electrical compound with two 110 kV substations and switchgear and associated load banks and auxiliary/controls. construction of a maximum of 4no. carbon steel diesel storage tanks of 11.8 m diameter by 6.1m height with holding capacity of 625m3 each with associated bunding and adjacent filling apron, construction of a control building of 51.25m2 floor area and 4.0m high with associated wastewater holding tank.	21/10/2013
13477	Alter existing 220 kV station consisting of new single storey control building, new diesel generator building, 3 no. single storey modular buildings, and associated electrical equipment	25/10/2013
155	Alterations to the existing at Kilpaddoge 220 kV substation, comprising provision of new electrical equipment.	08/04/2015
139138	Construct a Peaker Power Plant	18/06/2018
139477	Extension of duration relating to previous application 13477	18/02/2019
18392	10 year planning permission to construct a battery storage facility within a total site area of up to 2.278ha, to include 50 no. self-contained battery container units.	18/02/2019
18878 / ABP-305739-19	10 year permission to construct a battery energy storage system	10/2/2020
19115	The development will consist of a grid stabilisation facility comprising the construction up to 4no. rotating stabilisers, 5no. battery storage containers,	12/03/2020

Planning reference	Development Description	Date Granted/ Approved
	1no. control room, 2no. transformers and ancillary equipment within a site area of approx. 1.46 hectares	
19381 / ABP-304807-19	Construction of a windfarm consisting of up to six wind turbines	Granted permission with conditions 06/01/2020
20850	For changes to the previously permitted peaker power plant development (planning ref. 13/138). It is proposed to change the energy source for the charging of the battery energy storage system (BESS) containers from diesel to charging off the national grid and to change the permitted layout for electrical equipment based on the consequence of the proposed change in energy source at an area located within the permitted development.	16/12/2020
ABP-307798-20	Proposed 400 kV electricity transmission cables, extension to the existing Kilpaddoge Electrical Substation and associated works, between the existing Moneypoint 400kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Carrowdoita South County Clare and existing Kilpaddoge 220/110kV Electrical Substation in the townland of Kilpaddoge County Kerry.	04/06/2021
ABP-308643-20	Amendment to previous granted permission - ABP-304807-19 which related to change in connection grid route for wind farm.	Granted permission with conditions 21/06/2021
21549	10 year planning permission for a high inertia synchronous compensator including back up diesel generator and associated diesel storage tank; a 220 kV high voltage gas insulated switchgear (GIS) substation; battery storage compound containing 5no. battery storage containers, enclosed in steel containers The planning application is on lands where grid stabilisation facility was previously permitted under planning register no 19/115.	20/8/2021
ABP-315838-23	Designated Development (Application for a Development at Tarbert under section 4 of the Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022): consists of the installation of three OCGT units which will collectively have the capacity to generate 150 MWe of temporary emergency electricity, site development and associated ancillary works required for the operation of the plant. The plant will operate as an emergency plant, with a maximum running time of 500 hours per annum, spending the majority of time on standby, and will be run to meet emergency security of supply needs while complementing renewable power generation sources	29/03/2023 (Recommendations signed by the Minister)
23350	Development comprising works to Tarbert 220 kV substation compound including a new 220 kV switchgear bay and laying of cables within Tarbert Power Station to the new cable sealing end in Tarbert substation.	Granted 17/01/24
ABP: 311233	10-year permission for proposed Shannon Technology and Energy Park consisting of power plant, battery energy storage system, floating storage and regasification unit, jetty, onshore receiving facilities, above ground installation and all ancillary structures/works.	Refused 13/09/2023 – under Judicial Review

4.4 Foreshore and Maritime Usage Licence Applications

In the context of foreshore or maritime usage licence applications relevant to the area surrounding Moneypoint, it is noted that ESB and ESB Wind Development Limited submitted a combined total of four applications for works in the Shannon Estuary adjacent to Moneypoint Generating Station.

- LIC230008 (ESB) - An application for a Maritime Usage Licence Application for Marine Site Investigation Works for the Moneypoint Hub Project was submitted to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA). The application is currently under review.
- FS007137 (ESB Wind Development Ltd.) Moneypoint Offshore Wind Farm - Site Investigations off Clare and Kerry Coasts. This application has not been decided.

- FS007141 (ESB) Moneypoint Ecological Survey within Ballymacrinan Bay (Ecological survey in the form of nine grab samples for infauna and granulometric analysis to help characterise subtidal habitat and benthic communities). Granted approval by the Minister on 13 October 2020.
- FS006318 (ESB) Foreshore consent application for construction of two wind turbines and an anemometer mast. Granted approval by the Minister on 04 November 2015. This foreshore consent related to applications – ABP - PL03.241624 / CCC 12/74, which have been constructed.

4.5 Conclusion

The precedence for the siting of power generation and ancillary utility support/ network infrastructure at Moneypoint Generating Station is well established, as energy related uses have been approved and carried out on the site for over 35 years. There is no change proposed to the nature of the existing generation plant, other than the type of fuel to be used/ availed of for energy generation. The proposed development, entailing chiefly a change from the use of coal to HFO as a fuel source, the installation of two additional new HFO storage tanks and other relatively minor equipment/ structures for such energy generation, the dismantling of existing redundant equipment and structures and proposed changes to the existing and permitted ASA profile, will be consistent in nature and character of the existing development, operational processes and use.

In conclusion, neither the planning history of the proposed development itself, nor of the surrounding area, includes development or planning applications which would preclude the consideration of the subject lands for the proposed development.

5 Relevant Supporting Assessments

5.1 Introduction

The planning application for the proposed development is accompanied by assessments which have been completed in accordance with relevant statutory legislation. These assessments have been prepared to inform the competent authority, in this case An Bord Pleanála, on the likely effects impacts of the development proposed development.

5.2 Requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment

The existing Moneypoint Security of Supply project has a total electrical generating capacity of c.900 MWe with a cumulative heat output greater than 300 MW, which will remain unchanged as a result of the proposed change from coal to heavy fuel oil.

As has been set out within Section 5.3 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) that accompanies the planning application, the proposed development is listed as a class of development project under Schedule 5 (Development for the Purposes of Part 10), Part 1, Paragraph 2(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended; specifically:

“A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.

In addition to the provisions of Schedule 5, Part 1, the proposed development is also considered to comprise a class of development as listed in Schedule 5, Part 2, Paragraph 6(d) and 11:

“6. Chemical Industry (development not included in Part 1 of this Schedule)

(d) Storage facilities for petrochemical and chemical products, where such facilities are storage to which the provisions of Articles 9, 11 and 13 of Council Directive 96/82/EC apply.”

Although Directive 96/82/EC (Seveso II Directive) is no longer in force, having been repealed and replaced by Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU), both Seveso Directives set obligations for operators to manage sites where dangerous substances are stored in large quantities. Moneypoint Generating Station is categorised as an ‘Upper Tier establishment’ under the Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (which transposes and implements the Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU)).

Whilst Moneypoint Generating Station is not a chemical industry installation, the above-referenced articles of the Seveso II Directive still apply as the Moneypoint site continues to be categorised as an Upper Tier establishment which stores petroleum products - HFO and [petroleum] distillate.

The proposed development is also considered under Part 2, Paragraph 11 – *Other Projects*;

11. Other projects

(b) - Installations for the disposal of waste with an annual intake greater than 25,000 tonnes not included in Part 1 of this Schedule.”

In the above regard, the proposed development will result in the continued deposition of waste from the combustion process at a volume greater than 25,000 tonnes per annum and thus meets the threshold as outlined in Class 11(b).

In regard to all the above, there is a mandatory requirement for the preparation of an EIAR for the proposed development as the thresholds set out in above-referenced paragraphs are either met and/ or are exceeded.

The proposed development will also entail the decommissioning and removal of coal handling plant and the dismantling of associated buildings, with the removal of structures to ground level. However, these works are not expected to have potential for significant effects on the environment and consequently, the development is not considered to trigger the requirement for mandatory EIA in relation to Part 2 Paragraph 14 (Works of Demolition) and Paragraph 15.

5.3 Appropriate Assessment

A Report to Inform the Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been prepared to accompany this application, which considered the potential for the proposed works to have significant effects on European Site(s), either alone or in combination, with other plans or projects. The assessment concluded that there is potential for significant effects on the following European sites in the absence of mitigation from the proposed works:

- Lower River Shannon SAC 002165
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077
- Mid-Clare Coast SPA 004182
- Illaunonearaun SPA 004114
- Magherree Islands SPA 004125
- Blasket Island SPA 004008
- Skelligs SPA 004007
- Loop Head SPA 004119
- Cliffs of Moher SPA 004005
- Tralee Bay Complex SPA 004188
- Kerry Head SPA 004189

It was concluded that likely significant effects on the above European Sites cannot be excluded on the basis of objective evidence, from the proposed development alone, or in combination with other plans or projects. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has therefore been prepared in support of the Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken by An Bord Pleanála. The NIS identifies mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the above-mentioned European Sites and considers whether the elements of the proposed development with potential for likely significant effects will adversely affect the integrity of European Sites with respect to each site's conservation objectives. The NIS concludes that, with the implementation of the mitigation measures detailed in Section 5.5 of the NIS, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites by the proposed development, alone and in combination with other projects and plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

5.4 COMAH Land Use Planning Report

The European Communities, Control of Major-Accident Hazards involving Hazardous Substances (COMAH) Regulations under Directive 2012/18/EU were transposed into Irish legislation through S.I. No. 209 of 2015 Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015. The regulations require operators of establishments where dangerous substances are present, in quantities equal to or in excess of defined thresholds, to take all measures necessary to prevent major accidents, limit their consequences and ensure a high level of protection for man and the environment.

Establishments, which fall under the remit of the COMAH Regulations, are classified as either 'lower tier' or 'upper tier' sites depending on the quantities of dangerous substances held on site.

Moneypoint Generating Station is licensed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under an Industrial Emissions (IE) Licence (Register Number: P0605-04). The proposed development includes works located entirely within the IE licenced boundary of Moneypoint Generating Station which is an Upper-tier establishment to which the Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (the COMAH Regulations) apply.

The proposed development has been subject to a Land Use Planning Assessment in accordance with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) Guidance. A copy of the Land Use Planning Report COMAH assessment is provided in Appendix D of the EIAR which accompanies this planning application. The HSA land use planning department have also been informed of the proposed planning application.

6 Planning Assessment

6.1 Introduction

Moneypoint Generating Station represents a key strategic electricity generation station for the State. The proposed development aims to support the national energy grid in the short term, with limited run hours for a period of five years until the end of 2029 when Moneypoint Generation Station will cease generation, through the continued running of the existing 900MW Moneypoint electricity generation plant for the purpose of security of supply generation and strategic fuel storage in response to the national emergency relating to security of electricity supply, and at the specific request of EirGrid.

Within the wider ESB transition of Moneypoint to a renewable energy future, the proposed development will assist to ensure that the Generating Station can remain operational to supply the national grid during the transition, after the burning of coal has ended, whilst continuing to meet the ESB's stated intention to cease burning coal at Moneypoint Generating Station as part of its 2040 Strategy - "Driven to Make a Difference-Net Zero by 2040". This commits ESB to a zero-carbon future and includes the development of its Green Atlantic project, which will see Moneypoint become a strategic resource for the offshore wind industry and as a location for key grid services.

The following sections provide a high-level planning assessment and outline of the likely 'substantive' topics of consideration arising from a proper planning and sustainable development perspective of the proposed development.

6.2 Principle of Development and Policy Context

Moneypoint Generating Station is a strategically important electricity generator for the State, and is the country's largest generation station, with an installed capacity of ca. 900MW. The station was commissioned between 1985 to 1987 and has an established use for electricity generation since it became operational.

The principle of development has thus already been established as the proposed development is a strategic electricity generation site and has been since its commissioning. The proposal to continue generation until 2029 highlights the enduring importance of Moneypoint to the State's electricity security of supply. The proposed development does not result in any changes to the extant land use zoning, 'Marine-Related Industry', which is deemed to comprise electricity generation land use classes. In addition, as noted in section 1.3, coal fired generation can currently take place on all units without any annual limit i.e, to a total run time of 26,280 hours per year. Even allowing for maximum generating time, the conversion to HFO and the changed operating profile will assist in reducing emissions from Moneypoint Generating Station. The proposed development will move the generating station to a lower carbon profile as part of the ESB's transition to a renewables focussed energy generation future, while continuing to support energy security on the island, and will facilitate Moneypoint Generating Station to operate without the use of coal, in advance of the 2035 deadline for the cessation of energy generation from coal upon the island of Ireland.

The proposed development is of a type of development which has been active on the site since 1985. The subject proposal relates to a continuation of its use for power generation using HFO instead of coal, for a limited period up to 31 December 2029, until it has been established that security of supply is not at risk should Moneypoint cease generation. Whilst it is acknowledged that although the proposed development extends the use of fossil fuels at Moneypoint, the use of HFO as a transition fuel will result in reduced carbon emissions from the facility and it is

proposed that the facility will only be used as an option of ‘last resort’, with its operation being restricted to when it is decided by EirGrid that capacity shortfall is present within the national grid and additional security of supply is deemed to be required to be provided.

There has been an identified deficit between electricity generation capacity and electricity demand by EirGrid and SONI; this has been a recurring scenario within previous iterations of the All-Island Capacity Statement in recent years. In this regard, the requirement for the continued use of older generation units for a temporary period was stated under the Electricity Security of Supply Programme of Works, published by the CRU in September 2021. This has recently culminated in EirGrid and ESB signing a Services Agreement (TCM). This agreement will make Moneypoint Generating Station available as an out-of-market generator of last resort from 2025 to 31 December 2029. Thus, the station will not be active in the wholesale electricity market but will be available to operate, at the instruction of EirGrid, as a backup to the system in the event of a shortage of generation capacity.

The identified need for the project has thus been well established over recent years as the State transitions to increasing electrification, coupled with an increasing population, which has created a greater demand for electricity.

The proposed development is one step on the journey to net zero at the Moneypoint site, which has been evidenced since 2018 when several wind turbines became operational at the site, and through the recent installation of a synchronous condenser which is required to provide grid stabilisation in preparation for increased renewable energy grid connections.

In addition to the above, and as outlined within the policy section (Chapter 3) of this Planning Report, through the separate policy ‘Project Responses, the proposed development is supported by and aligned and in accordance with planning objectives and policies throughout the planning hierarchy. Sustainable development is the cornerstone of the planning system in Ireland, much of which is not possible without an uninterrupted electricity supply.

The proposed development is thus considered to be in accordance with policy and the principles and objectives of proper planning and sustainable development.

6.3 Alternatives

Chapter 3 of the EIAR outlines in comprehensive detail, the various options and reasonable alternatives considered for the proposed development. The environmental impacts of each option were considered. Within this context, the EIAR highlights that a ‘Do Nothing’ alternative would entail the complete shutdown of Moneypoint in 2025 when the ESB ceases to burn coal for power generation and that this is contrary to EirGrid’s request to the ESB to enter into a Targeted Contracting Mechanism for the provision of security of supply for a limited and defined time, to support the existing transmission system. In this scenario, it is also possible that extended power outages could occur in the absence of sufficient generators or fuel to cover the winter peaks in the period 2024 to 2029, as the use of coal will be discontinued, and the ‘Do Nothing’ scenario is therefore not considered to be feasible.

In consideration of potential alternative sites, it is highlighted that the proposed development is to be located within the existing Moneypoint Generating Station - due to be closed in 2025. Given concerns regarding security of energy supply, the ESB were approached by EirGrid to consider maintaining operations at Moneypoint up to 2029. However, in its current figuration, Moneypoint Generating Station will not be eligible to bid in the Capacity Auction post 2024, as continued operation on coal would be unable to meet the CO₂ emission limits which govern the Integrated Single Electricity Market⁴. To therefore provide a viable commercial solution for the

⁴ Due to Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2019/943 - Internal Market for Electricity (recast), the Units will not be eligible to enter into capacity contracts beyond 01 July 2025

continued operation of Moneypoint, EirGrid and ESB are agreed on a Services Agreement for the provision of Security of Supply generation, of up to 3000 hours per unit per year, for the period 2024 to 2029, with breakout clauses in 2027 and 2028 if sufficient new generation has entered the market. The majority of the existing infrastructure at Moneypoint Generating Station can thus be utilised, thereby negating the need to undertake extensive works as part of this proposed development. Consequently, the proposed development, which would utilise the existing site and facility, will not require the acquisition or development of any greenfield areas. The proposed development would therefore ensure that potential environmental impacts are mitigated by avoidance.

The use of alternative fuels has also been reviewed within the EIAR. Such consideration included alternative fuels such as Gas conversion and Biomass. In summary, and in the context of gas conversion, assessments have indicated that a gas conversion of the existing plant is unlikely to meet the CO₂ emissions limits required to participate in the capacity market, as set out in the Clean Energy Package and would also require the development of an additional 25 km gas pipeline and associated infrastructure which would not be possible within the required timeframe to address current security of supply issues and concerns. In relation to biomass, testing shows that the existing mills are not suitable for biomass. A biomass conversion would require repurposing of the existing coal yard. This would require an extended outage of the entire plant and delay the potential future delivery of the ESB Green Atlantic project.

In the context of the above therefore, the existing plant already has the capability of 100% HFO firing in addition to coal, without the need for significant additional support/ transmission/ grid infrastructure and it can be re-configured quickly, within the timeframe required by EirGrid, to generate significant amounts of electricity whilst nonetheless remaining compliant with environmental emission controls and legislation. HFO also offers the option of freeing up the existing coal yard for future development associated with the ESB's vision of its Green Atlantic project where the existing coal handling equipment could be removed, and the area reconfigured in the future for renewable energy associated purposes.

6.4 Environmental Impact Assessment Report

As stated in Section 5.2, an EIAR is required to be prepared for the proposed development. The EIAR has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU and Irish national law, policy and practice, including Annex IV of the EIA Directive, and Schedule 6 – *Information to be contained in EIAR* of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

The EIAR identifies that any construction phase activities related to the proposed development will be managed through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (which incorporates all mitigation measures from the EIAR and NIS), Construction Resource and Waste Management Plan and Construction Phase Traffic Management Plan. The proposed development relates to an existing activity licenced by the Environmental Protection Agency under the Industrial Emission Directive, as such, the operations and its environmental impacts will continue to be managed through the conditions of its IE Licence.

The EIAR has considered the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment. The implementation of mitigation measures as collated in Chapter 19 of the EIAR would mitigate any significant effects on the environment in either the construction, operational and maintenance or decommissioning phases.

An Bord Pleanála, as the competent authority, will be responsible for undertaking the required Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development.

6.5 Appropriate Assessment

As noted in section 5.3 of this Planning Report, this application for approval includes a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of EU and Irish national law, policy and best practice. A copy of the NIS is provided in the application documentation.

In summary, the mitigation measures detailed in Section 5.5 of the NIS will ensure that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites in light of the site's conservation objectives. Based on the assessment of the proposed development alone and in combination with other projects and plans, including the implementation of mitigation measures, the NIS has concluded that no adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites will arise, in view of the site's conservation objectives. Notwithstanding, it is noted that An Bord Pleanála, as the competent authority, will undertake the Appropriate Assessment for this application.

7 Conclusion

The proposed development will facilitate the transition away from coal burning at Moneypoint Generating Station and ensure continued support of the energy grid during the transition to renewables. This project forms part of a wider programme to decarbonise the energy sector and provide stability to the grid.

The flexible nature of the proposed development, and the integrated design of it with existing compatible land uses and energy infrastructure, will allow for appropriate operational flexibility in order to respond to fluctuations in the grid. This Planning Report details the key planning issues that have been considered by the project team in respect of the proposed development.

This assessment of the proposed development illustrates that it is in accordance with strategic planning and policy considerations, and the principles of sustainable development. In summary, the proposed development:

- Complies with and supports the provisions of EU, national, regional, local and sectoral policy and objectives.
- The proposed development is a recognised 'key action' in addressing security of supply by the CRU, EirGrid and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- Will only be required for a defined and temporary period aligned with the provision of national Security of Supply generation, of up to 3000 hours per unit per year, for the period 2024 to 2029.
- Will largely utilise existing infrastructure at the existing Moneypoint Power Generating Station. It therefore has a strong foundation for the siting of existing and previously permitted power generation and ancillary utility support/ network infrastructure, at this location (at Moneypoint Generating Station). The proposed development will not result in any change to the existing and/ or previously permitted power generation or associated 'landfill' uses.
- Is consistent and in accordance with the extant land use zoning provisions as reflected within the Clare County Development Plan.
- Can not be precluded from a positive consideration on the basis of incompatibility with surrounding developments, as neither the planning history of the proposed development itself, nor that of the surrounding area, includes development or planning applications which would have notable impact on the proposed development, nor conversely, that of the proposed development on other permitted development in the area.
- Has been subject to environmental assessments to ensure that environmental impacts are minimised as far as practicable. Once the proposed development is operational it will continue to be managed under an Industrial Emissions Licence granted by the Environmental Protection Agency.

In conclusion, the proposed development will result in the cessation of electricity generation from coal within the State. The proposed development represents a managed and controlled exit of ca. 900 MW of conventional generation from the electricity grid in the context of security of supply. The proposed development will help to support the State's transition to a low carbon economy through a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions emitted from Moneypoint Generating Station and assisting to ensure that installed renewable energy generation will comprise a larger percentage of the national energy supply in the years to 2029.

Having regard to the above, it is concluded that the proposed development would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

