

KILKENNY DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020-2026

SUBMISSION TO WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

SUBMITTED BY:

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WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2020-2026

Castledockrell Wind Group Ltd makes the following submission to the Wind Energy Development Strategy of the Kilkenny Draft County Development Plan 2020-2026:

1. Renewable energy projects such as wind farm developments should be considered for the lands of Freagh Hill, primarily in the townlands of Coolatogher, Raheenroche, Moanteenmore,, Glencoum, Coppanagh and Tikerlevan, Map 1. Currently this area is deemed 'Unsustainable' in the Kilkenny County Plan 2014-2020 Appendix J *Wind Energy Development Strategy*
2. That cycling and walking initiatives are supported as part of a wind farm development at Freagh Hill and should be formally recognised as e.g "Freagh Hill Wind Farm: Local Walking Trail".
3. That the developers of any wind farm in this area should be obliged to support the local community by enhancing these and other tourism initiatives for as long as the wind farm is in operation.

Three principal reasons are used by in the current Wind Energy Development Strategy in making a case to have the Freagh Hill area identified as being *Unsuitable*, as follows:

- I. The area belongs to the Brandon Hill Uplands in the LCA¹ assessment and is categorised as being *Sensitive*.
- II. Freagh Hill is deemed to be a *High prominence*.
- III. Two tourist attractions are listed for the area; the South Leinster Way and the East Kilkenny Cycle Route. It is suggested that wind farm development is not compatible with these amenities.

This assessment is flawed for a number of reasons:

High Prominence

1. The Principal Landscape Character Areas were defined 15 years ago when there were no statutory targets for renewable energy production. There is now a requirement to generate 40% of our energy requirements from renewable resources by 2020. This is unlikely to be achieved in Co. Kilkenny unless areas with adequate wind resources are utilised.
2. Freagh Hill is the lowest hill in the area. It is substantially screened by Croghan particularly when viewed from the east and southeast, Map 2.
3. Visibility of a relatively modest wind farm on the southwestern slopes of Freagh Hill from the Protected view (no. 23) on the South Leinster Way would be reliant on substantial, permanent

¹ Landscape Character Area

openings in the tree cover of the conifer plantation through which the South Leinster Way runs. Given the extent of the plantation this would be impossible.

Tourist attractions in the area

1. In recent years wind farms have become tourist attractions. For example, Kilbranish Wind Farm near Bunclody is located beside the actively used South Leinster Way and is featured by the Local Authority signage for the Walk. A second wind farm, Castledockrell Wind Farm, also near Bunclody is regularly used by local and visiting walkers.

Heritage and Activity Tourism Proposal

If wind energy development is permitted in the lands at Freagh Hill an opportunity would be created to add to the local tourist walking and cycling amenities. Walks would be developed within the wind farm site by the developers with the intention of linking these with the adjacent Coillte forest road network.

Suitable initiatives linking the site with walking and cycling activities from Graiguenamanagh would be supported by the developers. These would include supporting a link off the East Kilkenny Cycle Route at Graiguenamanagh.

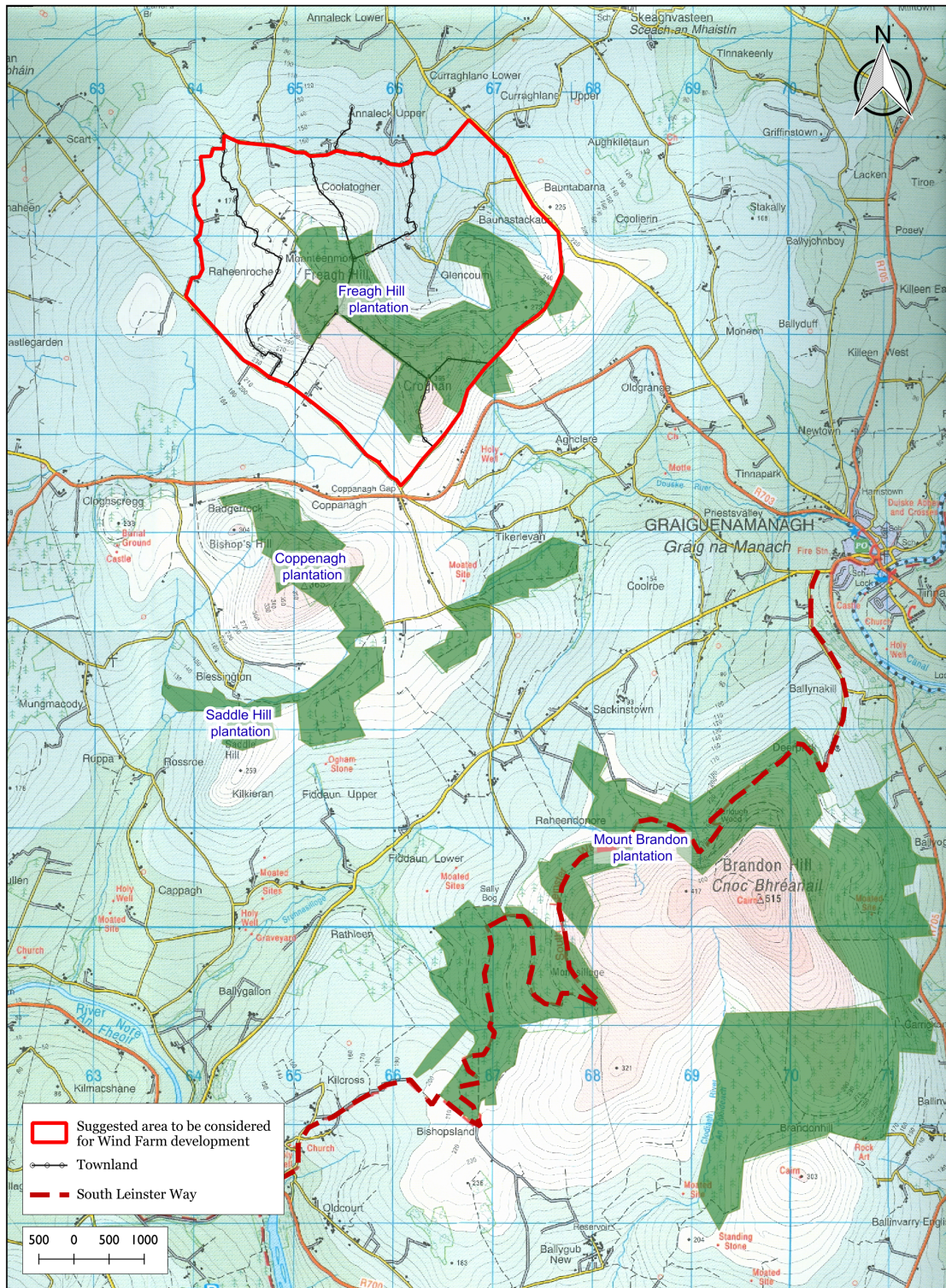
Funding Heritage and Activity Tourism

Specific proposals to enhance the local economy through heritage and activity tourism initiatives would be prepared as part of any planning proposals and implementation and maintenance would be guaranteed by the developers throughout the lifetime of the wind farm.

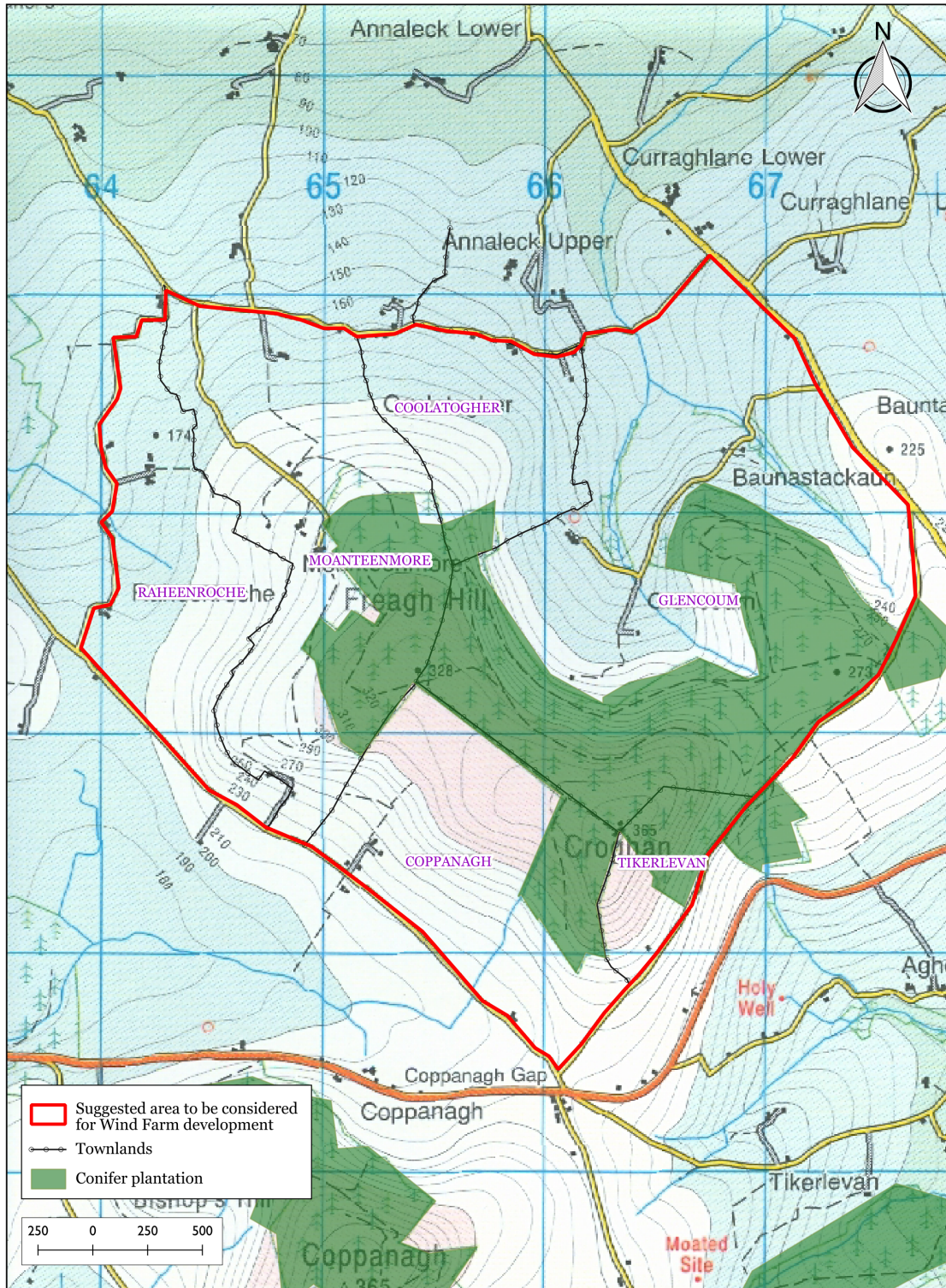
Advantages of permitting wind farm development at Freagh Hill.

Constructing a relatively modest, well regulated wind farm on Freagh Hill would represent a highly efficient use of the local wind resource in southeast County Kilkenny.

Illustrations



Map I. The Brandon Hill Uplands, dominated by Brandon Hill with the lower hills including Coppengagh, Saddle Hill, Croghan and Freagh Hill. Freagh Hill is lower than Croghan and is partially screened by local topography and several conifer plantations when viewed from the South Leinster Way. It is suggested that wind farm development should be considered for lands in the vicinity of Freagh Hill as indicated.



Map 2. The lands in the vicinity of Freagh Hill which it is suggested should be considered for wind farm development. The principal townlands are Raheenroche, Moanteenmore, Coolatogher, Glencoum, Tikerlevan and Coppanagh.