

Renewable Energy Targets and the County Development Plan

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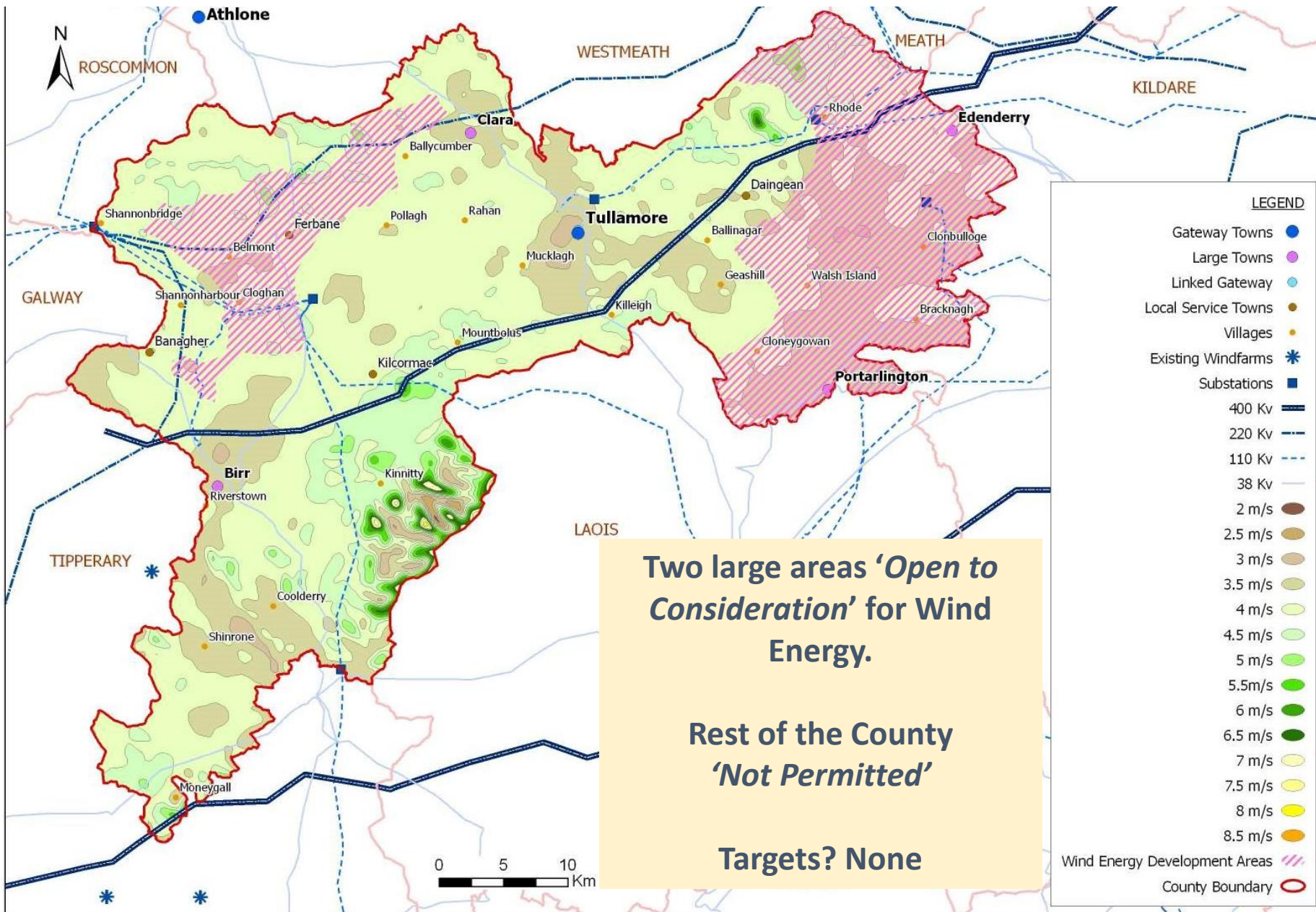
Renewable Energy Targets and the County Development Plan

- CDP is applying National Policy / Targets locally and also setting out local priorities – a very challenging balance.
- CDP is translating overall / national policy on renewables i.e. the must do's - to where it might be delivered spatially.
- 6 years doesn't be long coming around....
- Lead time for large energy developments are similar or longer than the length of the Development Plan...
- Current proposals can have a major impact on future policy.....

Offaly's Experience With Renewable Electricity & Targets

2008 – Present Day...

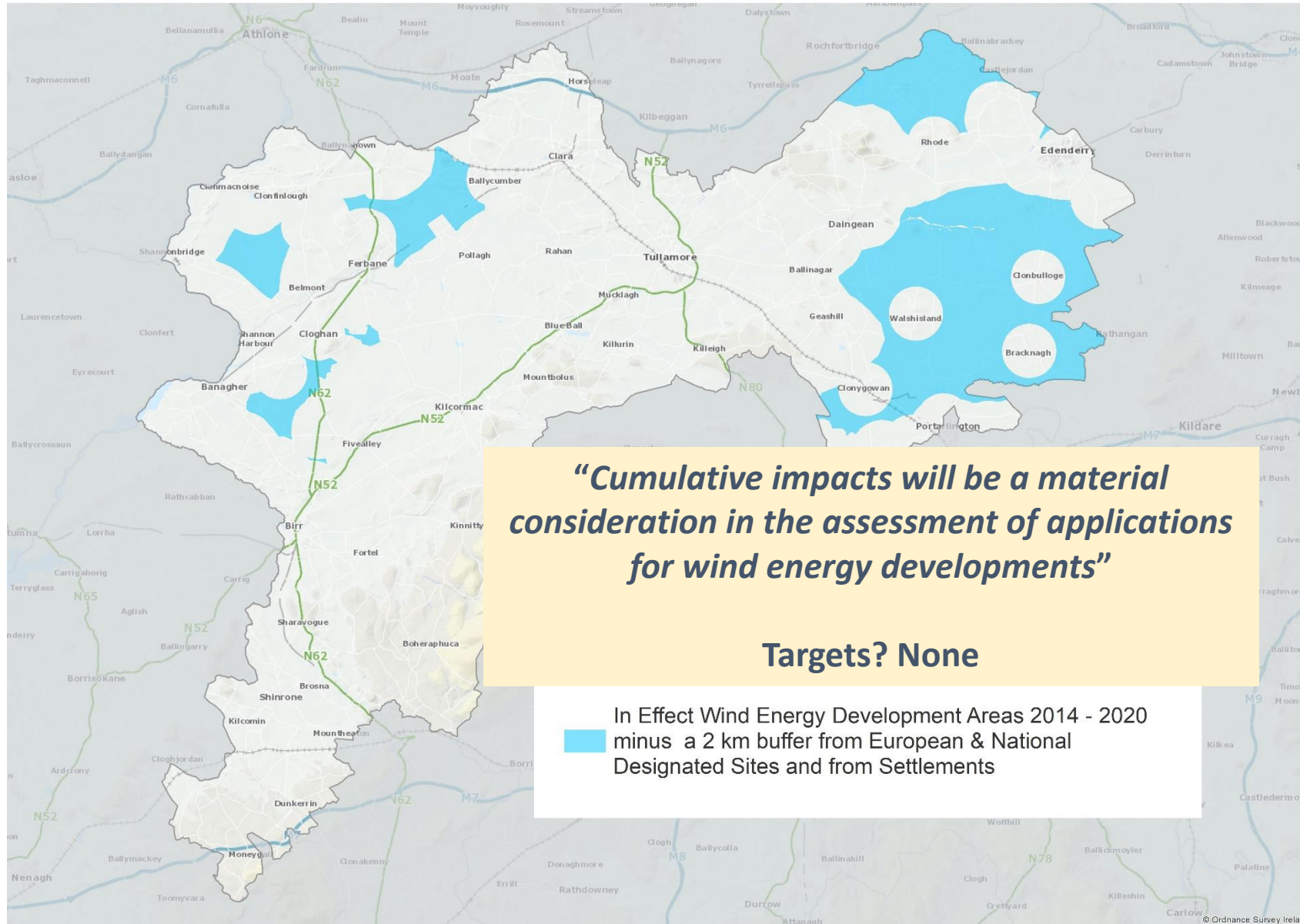
CDP 2009-2015 – 1st Wind Energy Strategy for Offaly



National Policy Context
 % of electricity from renewables to 30/33% by 2020. Mainly wind. (NCCS 2007-2012).

Offaly's Key Policy
"It is an objective of the Council to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to government policy on renewable energy and in enabling the wind energy resources of the county to be harnessed in an environmentally sustainable manner".

County Development Plan 2014-2020 – 2nd Wind Energy Strategy



National Policy Context

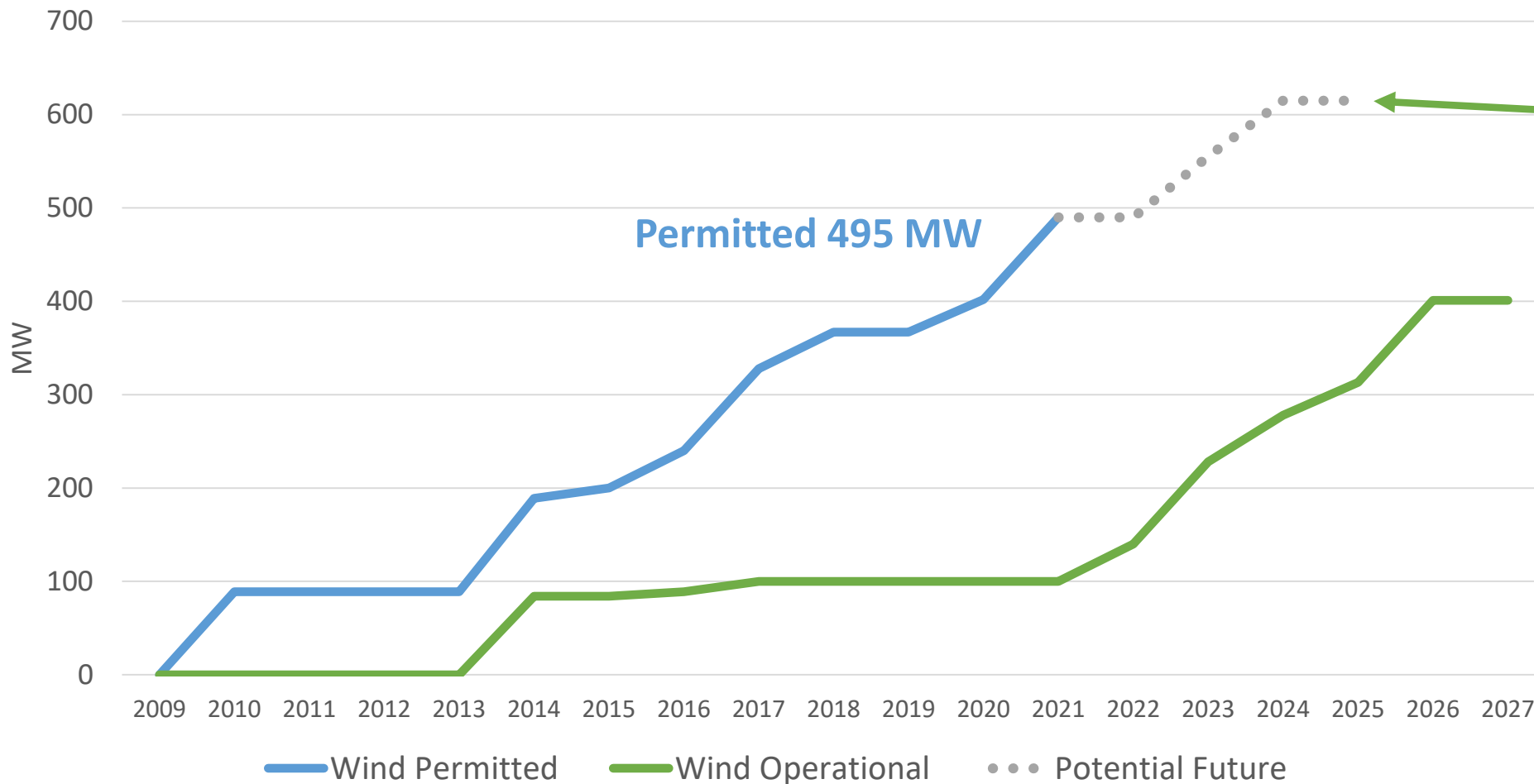
- NREAP - 3,550 MW renewables by 2030.
- Peat extraction to cease by 2030.
- 2013 - commenced revisions to 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines.

Offaly’s Key Policy

“Encourage wind energy in suitable locations on cutaway bogs.”

Introduced a 2 kilometre buffer around villages and Nature Designations.

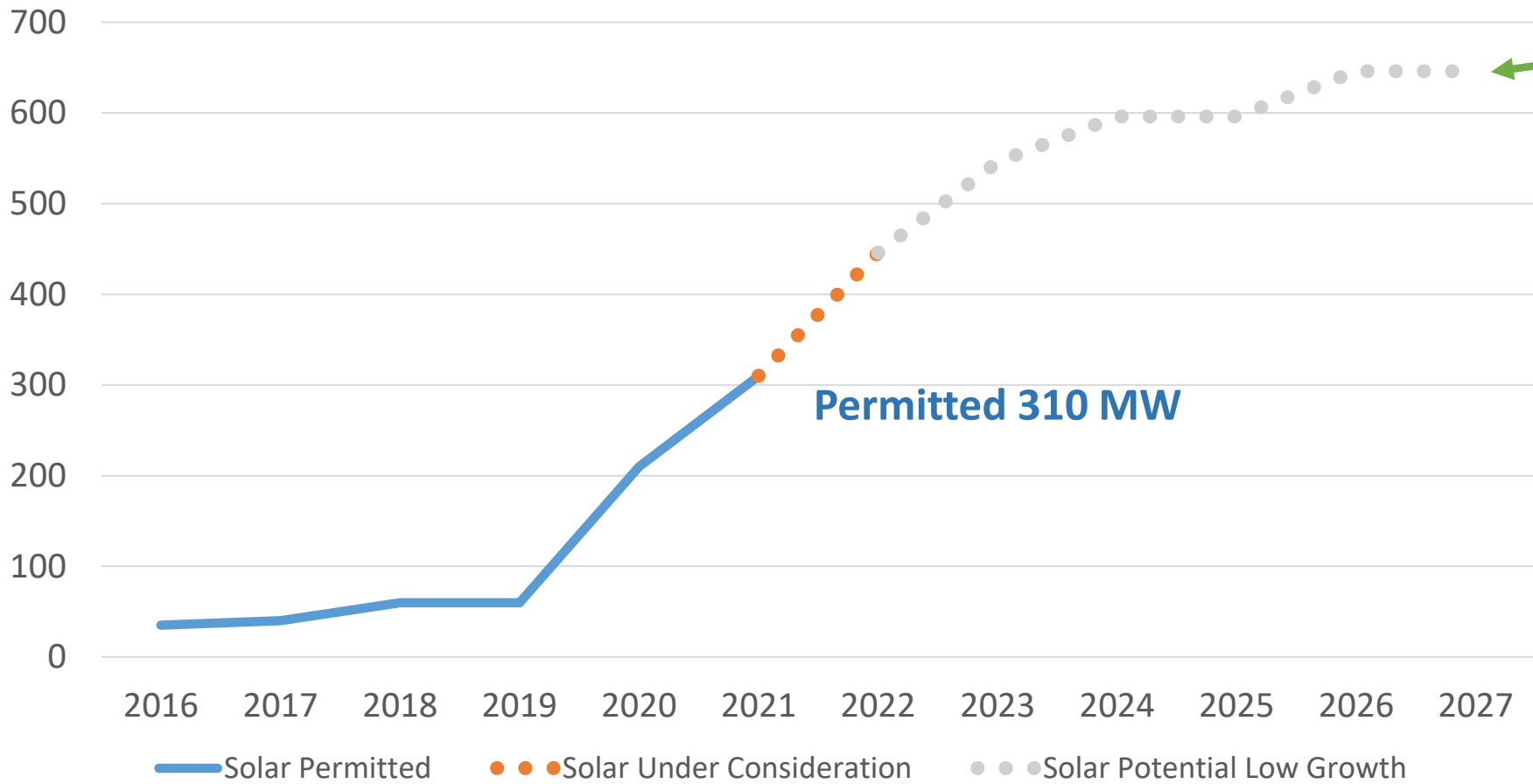
Offaly's Wind Energy 'Pipeline' 2009-2027



Based on two no. proposals at a very early stage, which have been publicly notified.

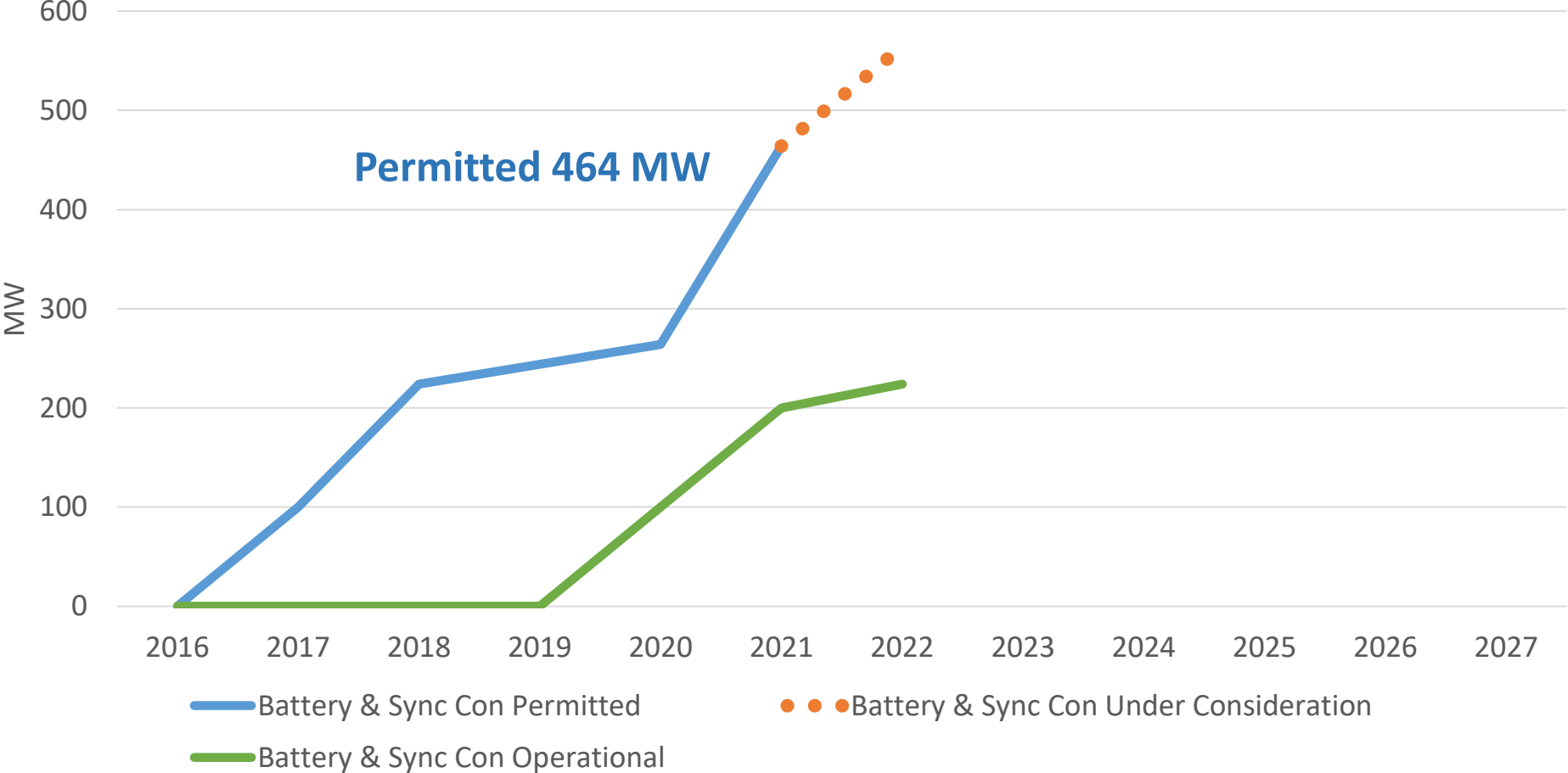
Not in the planning system as yet.

Offaly's Grid Scale Solar Energy 'Pipeline' 2016-2027



Based a planning application (MW) growth rate at 1/2 the 2020-2021 rate

Offaly's Battery Storage / Grid Services 'Pipeline' 2017-2022 (MW)



How did Offaly go from 255 MW Thermal (Peat) Generation in 2008 to a Renewables 'Pipeline' of c.1GW in 2021?

Long tradition of power generation in Offaly. General Public Support for the 'Transition'.



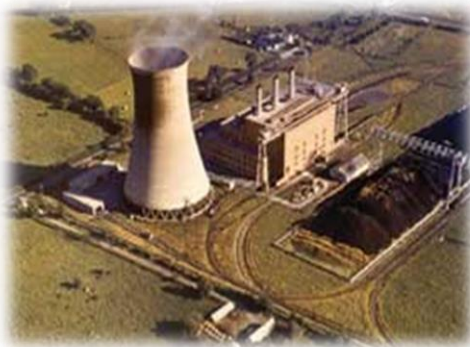
Ferbane



Rhode



Shannonbridge



Portarlinton

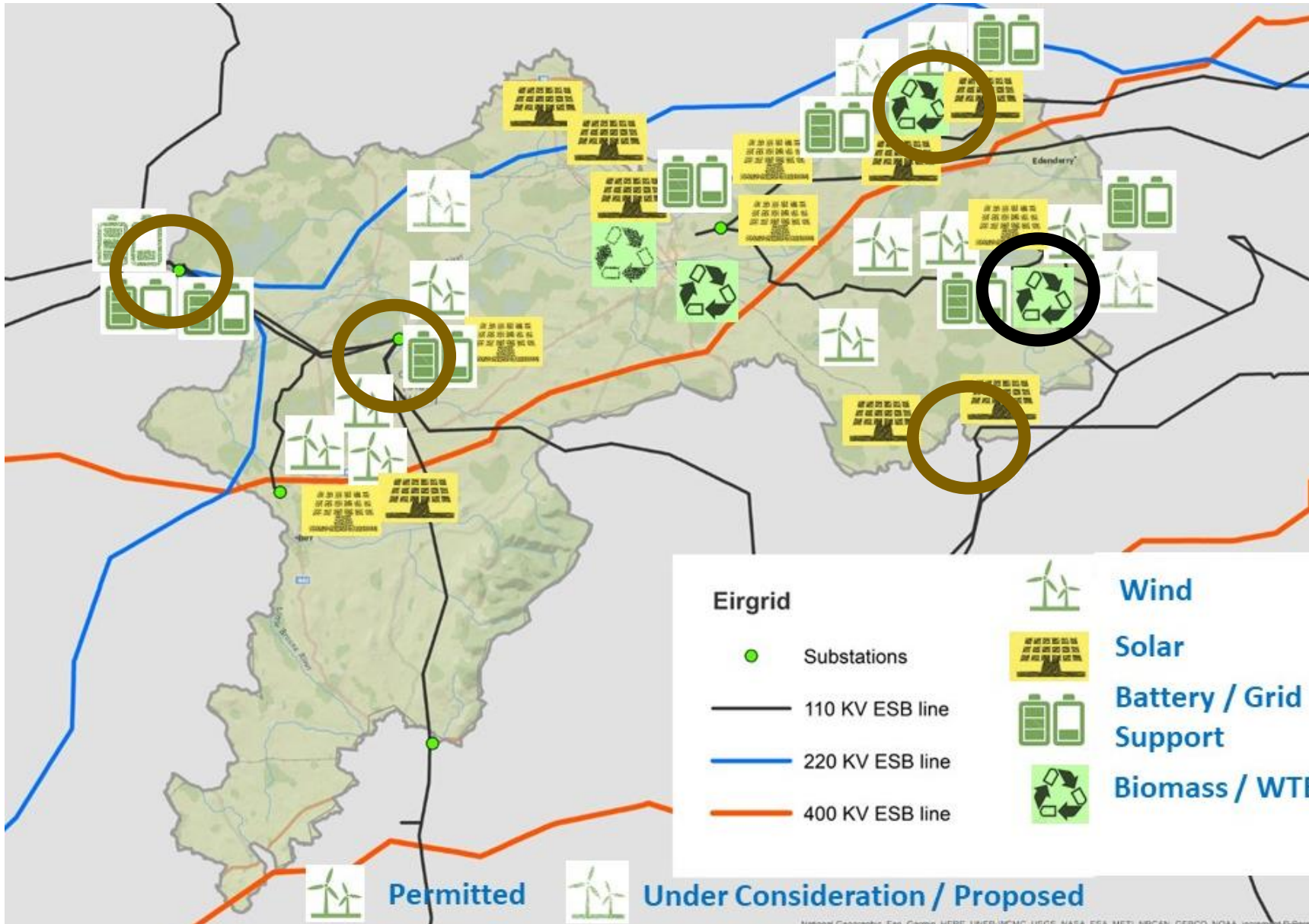
Combined Max. Output 348 MW
Decommissioned 1988-2003

Gone....



But not Forgotten!

Using 'Legacy' Infrastructure – Offaly's Grid Scale Projects 2021



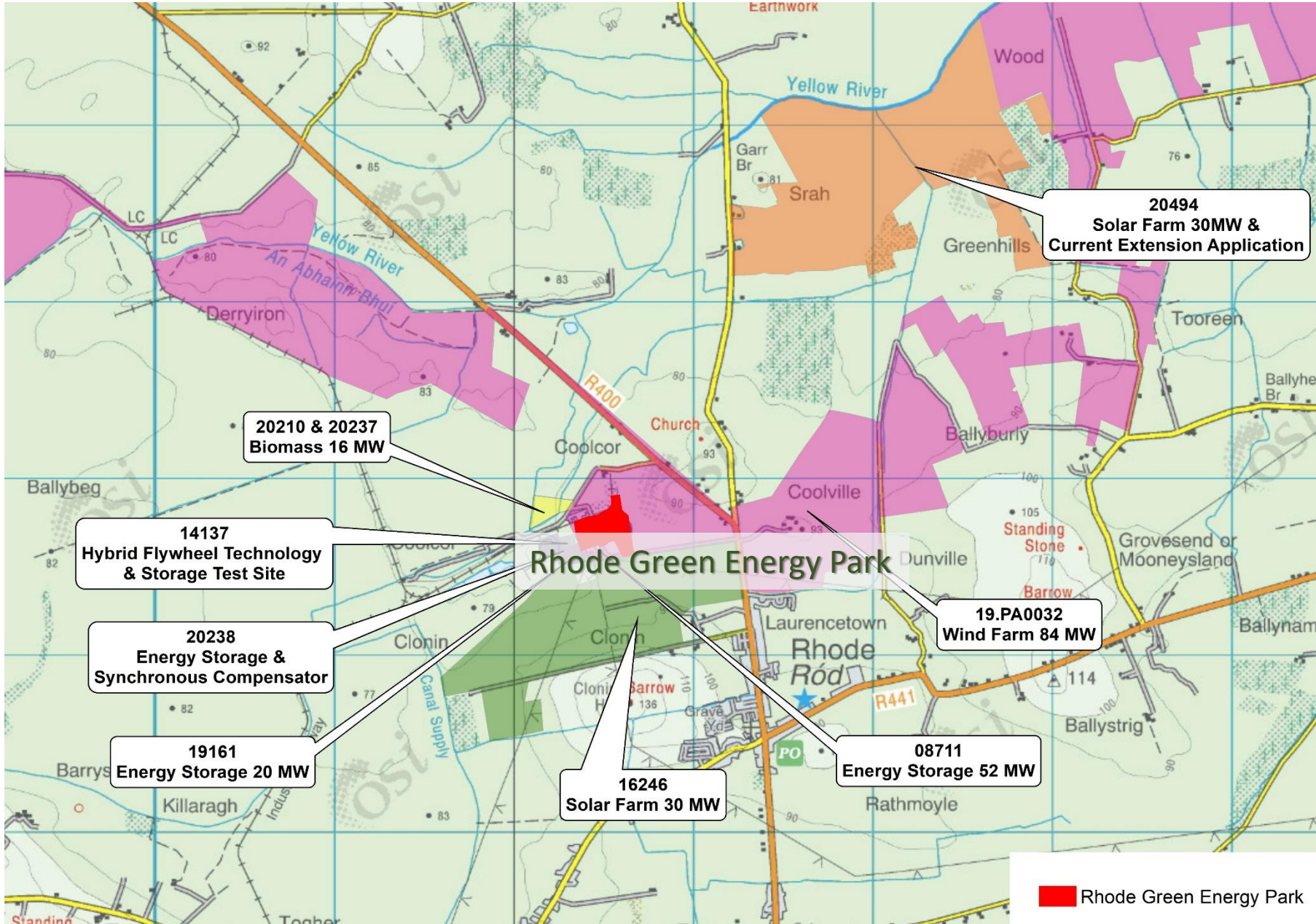
Strong electricity grid infrastructure and many brownfield sites.

2 x 400kV and 1 x 220kV lines – opportunity.

Peat extraction has also left many legacy sites with valuable infrastructure, also cutaway bogs.

- Existing Peat & Biomass-Fired Power Station** ○
- Former Peat-Fired Power Stations** ○

Economic Dividend From Renewables - Rhode Green Energy Park



Plus....
2021/2 Green Hydrogen
Demonstration Hub
Feasibility Study



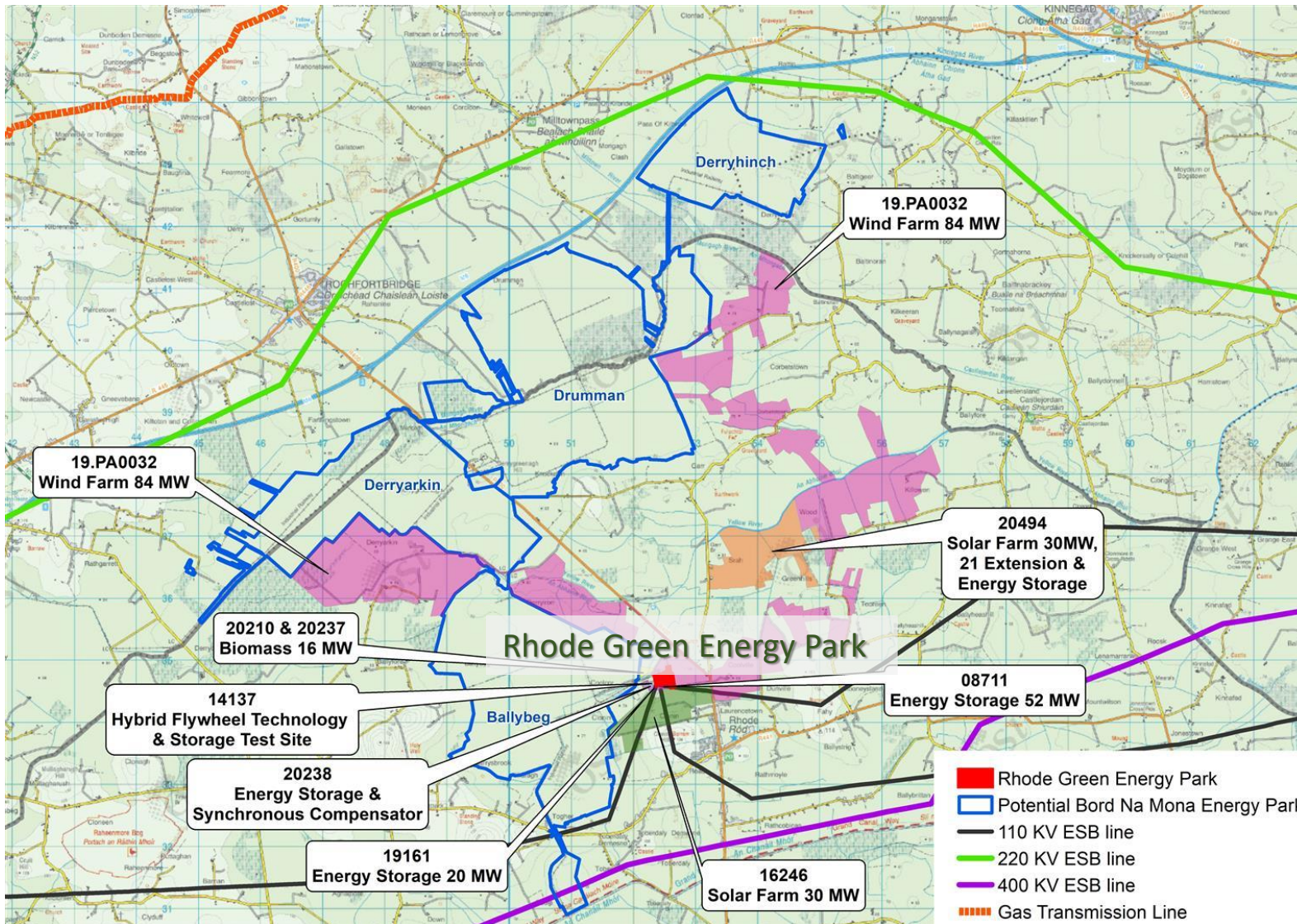
Bord na Móna

North Offaly
Development Fund



Rhode Green Energy Park – A Glimpse of the Future?

Real optimism that this could be the Starting Point & Exemplar for the *Green Energy Hub for the Midlands* as per the Programme For Government.



Amenities Can Certainly Help Public Support

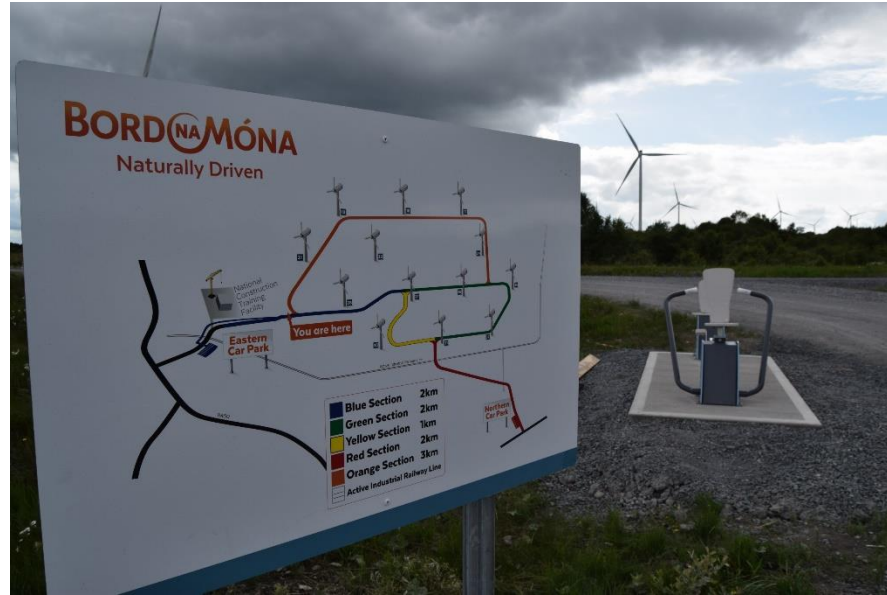


My Reconnaissance missions late 2000's

From This...



To This...



Mount Lucas Windfarm, Co. Offaly.



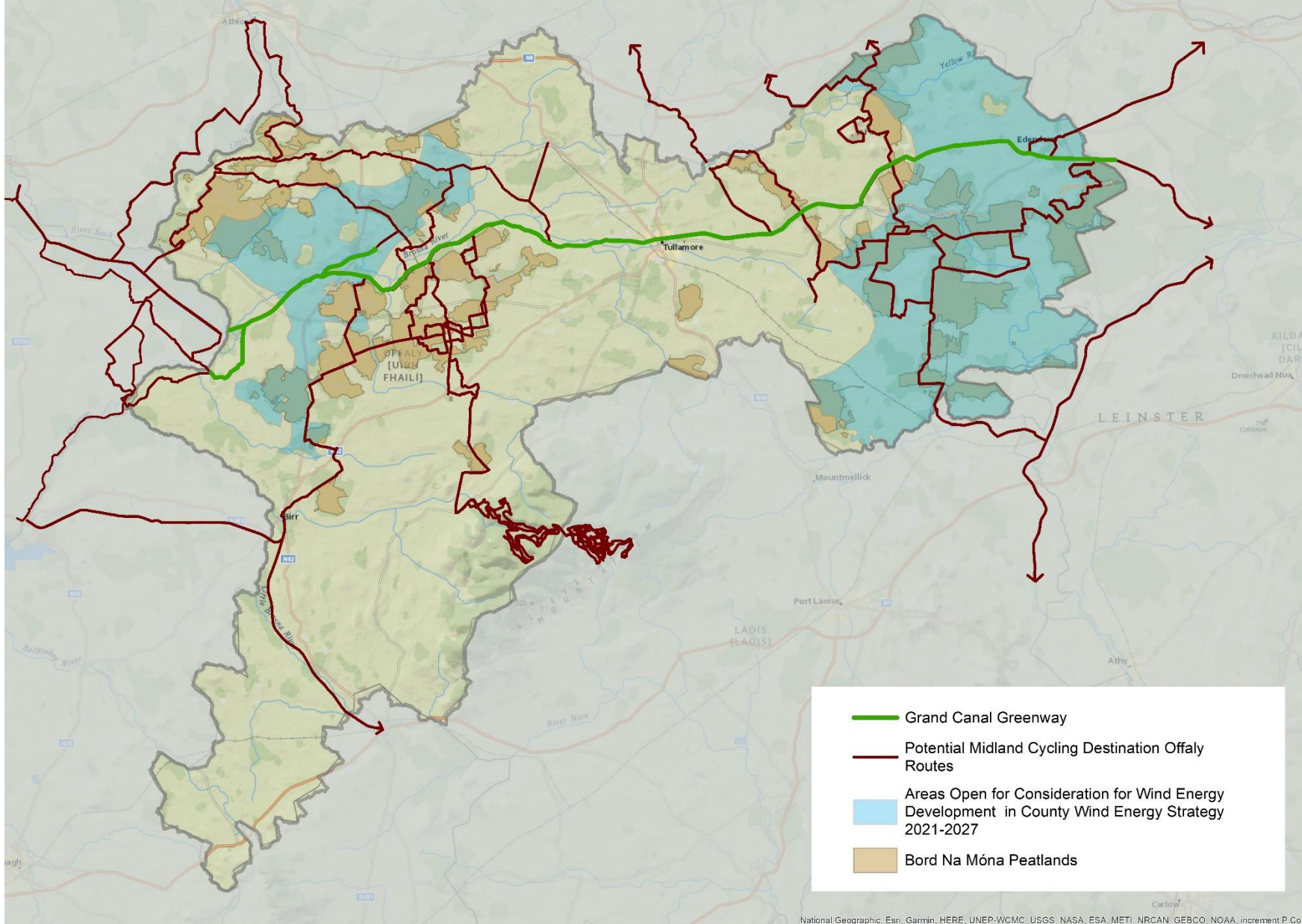
Renewable Energy & Amenities – Joined up Thinking?

Midlands Cycling Destination - Offaly

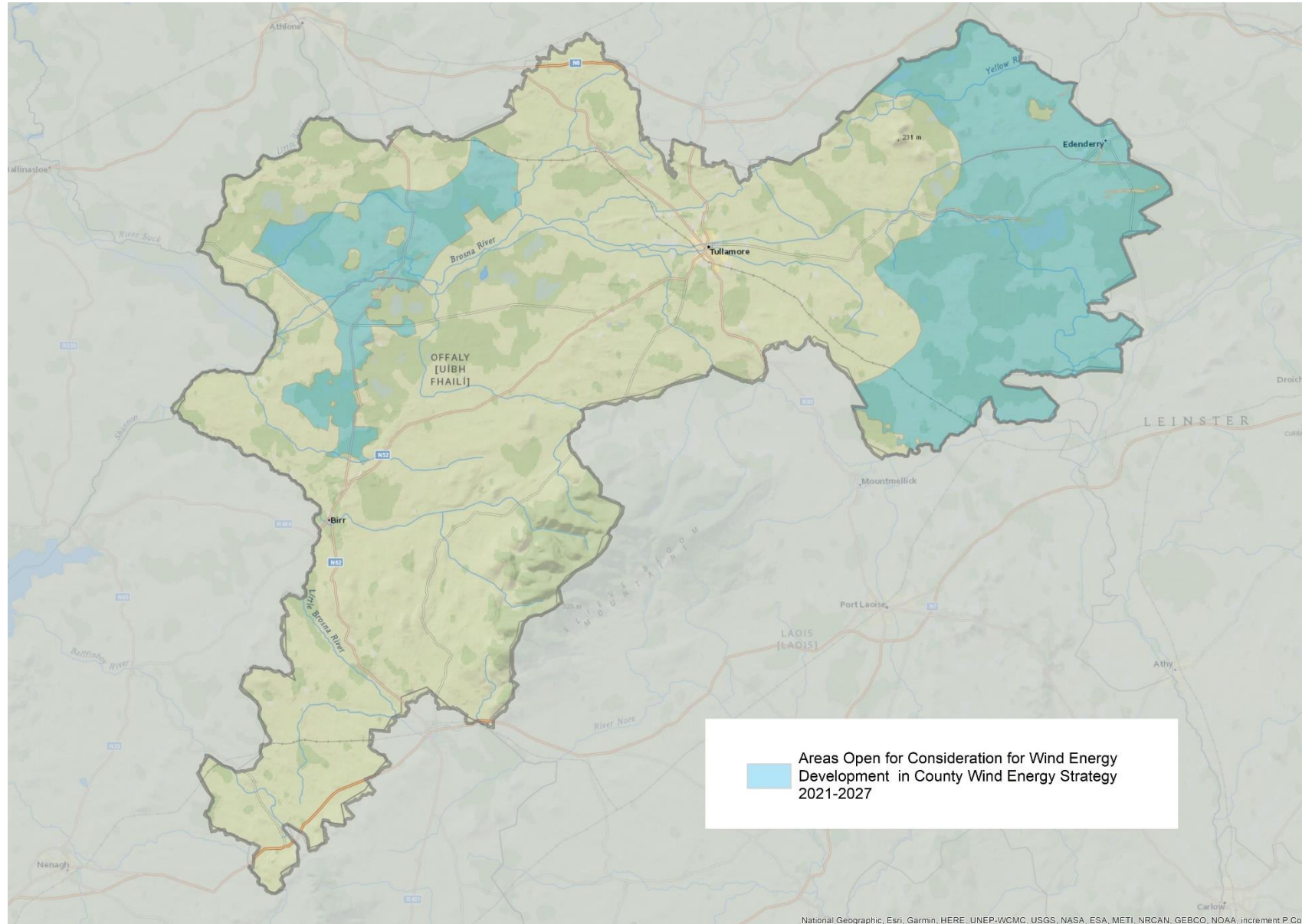
Hundreds of kms of off-road routes, largely across cutaway peatlands.

Multiple linkages to other National & Regional Greenways.

Some will be through renewable energy sites.



County Development Plan 2021-2027 – 3rd Wind Energy Strategy



National Policy Context

Climate Action Plan 2019 - Up to 8.2 GW wind and 1.5GW grid scale solar by 2030.

Offaly's Key Policy

"to achieve a reasonable balance.."

Omitted the 2km separation buffer around settlements – put trust in the draft revised guidelines – 4 times tip height.

Offaly CDP Review 2019-2021

“The End, The Middle or Just the Beginning”?

During the CDP review 2019-2021 the members debated (at length):

- We have a potential Wind, Solar, Battery / Grid & Biomass Systems ‘Pipeline’ of approx. 1GW....
- At what stage has the county ‘done its bit’?
- Concern that Offaly has done a lot more of the renewables ‘Heavy Lifting’ than other counties in the Midlands in particular.
- Does the county actually need to set a target for renewables when so much good work has already been done?

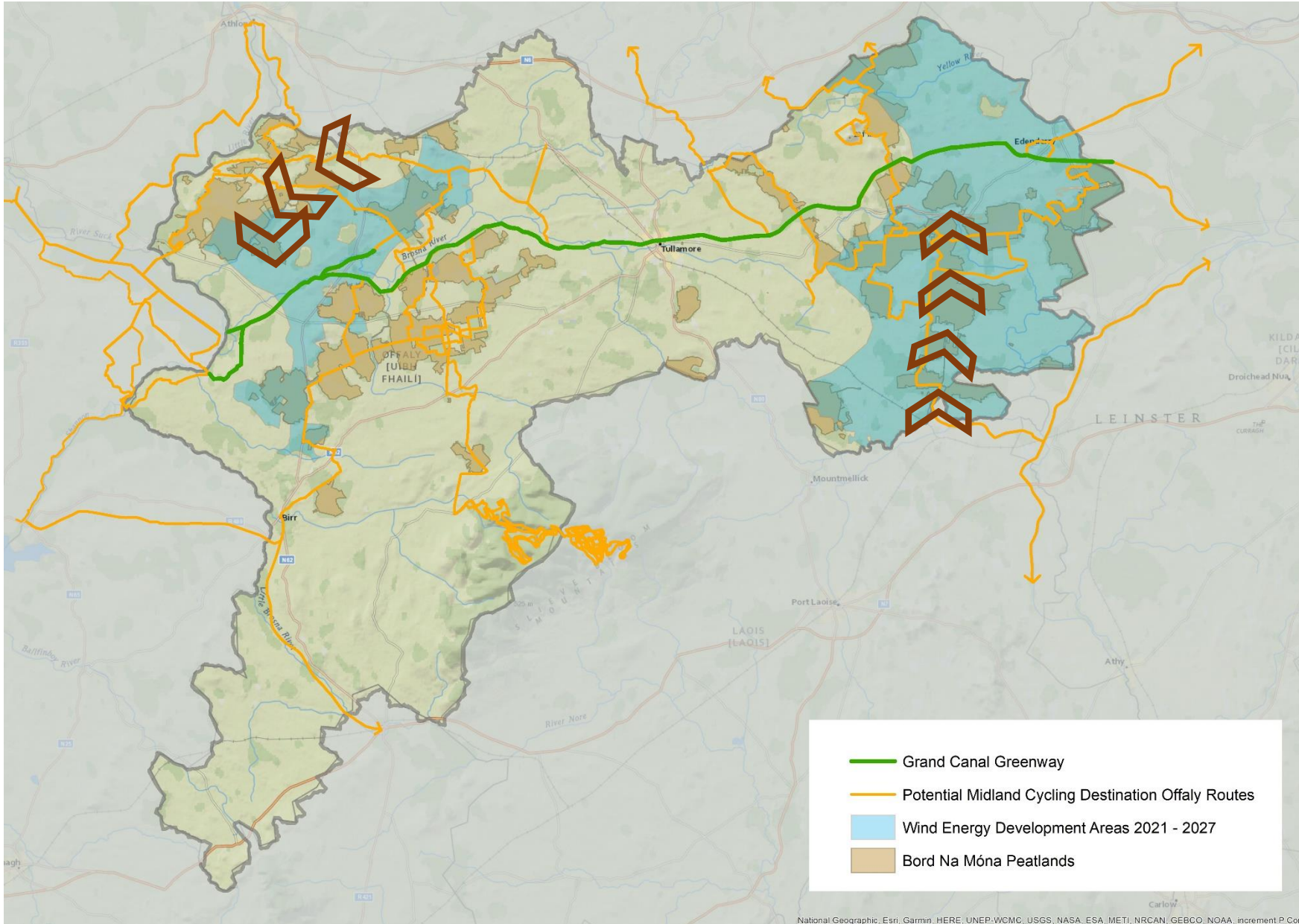
Offaly CDP Review 2019-2021

“The End, The Middle or Just the Beginning”?

Resolved to proceed with the Wind Energy Strategy, to await Regional Targets and to ensure the county ramps up efforts to secure:

- Recognition for playing its part in decarbonisation and the ‘Just Transition’.
- Real Economic Dividend from renewables to partly make up for job losses in peat production and the power stations.
- Amenities both as part of and separated from, energy developments.
- Mechanisms to prevent over-development / excessive cumulative impacts.

Offaly CDP 2021-2017 – Proposed ‘Wilderness Corridors’



Wilderness Corridors

“characterised by an absence of intrusive human activity, settlements, infrastructure or visual disturbance encouraging visitors to ‘go off the beaten track’, ‘to get away from it all’ ”

Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027... Targets

No targets in the Draft C.D.P. (2020) or the proposed Material Amendments (2021)

OPR required that Targets be inserted after the Material Amendments Stage

Targets Inserted – reluctantly - (August 2021): Keeping it simple, based on permitted and pipeline.

“In accordance with the Specific Planning Policy Requirement for the *Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change* (2017), Table 3.1 demonstrates County Offaly’s contribution to realising overall national targets (under the *Climate Action Plan 2019*) on renewable energy and climate change mitigation.... **In setting these targets, the Council has had regard to wind farm and solar farm developments, permitted and undeveloped as well as those under construction, which have the potential to be delivered in the plan period.**”

Wind Energy Target by end of Plan Period:	466.3 MW
Solar Energy Target by end of Plan Period:	145 MW
Battery Storage Target by end of Plan Period:	445 MW

“*These targets will be reviewed subsequent to the emergence of regional targets for wind and solar energy, and in doing so it will be of paramount importance to reflect on County Offaly’s existing (operational) and committed contribution to Ireland’s 2030 target for onshore wind energy development in relative terms, both within and outside of the region.*”

Conclusion 1: Targets are constantly Changing?

Current National Targets of 'up to' 8.2GW onshore wind & up to 1.5GW grid-scale solar by 2030.

2030 is only around the corner in planning terms, what will the figures be for 2050?

Lead times for very large renewables projects in Offaly have been 7-10 years...

Are we playing catch up with data centre electricity usage? Goalposts changing again?

Difficult for local policy makers to work out what their 'share' should be, and if you don't know that, it's also difficult to work out where it should be?

Conclusion 2: Need for National Guidance on What the National Targets (MW installed) will mean spatially?

National Policy Objective 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.”

“The forthcoming Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework will aim to identify strategic areas for the sustainable development of renewable electricity projects of scale.”

- The proposed Renewable Electricity Framework is in the pipeline since 2013.
- (Revised Wind Energy Guidelines also in preparation since 2013).
- Need a Layering Exercise – other sectors eg. tourism, conservation, nature designations, energy opportunities, settlements, heritage...

Project Ireland 2040

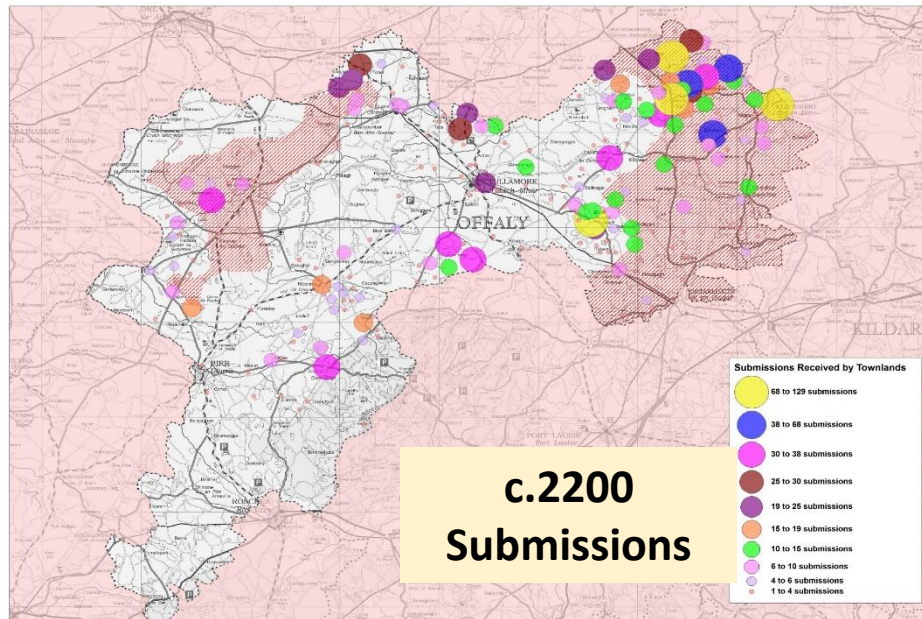
National Planning Framework

Conclusion 3: Policy & Strategy For Such Infrastructure Is Never Far From Controversy

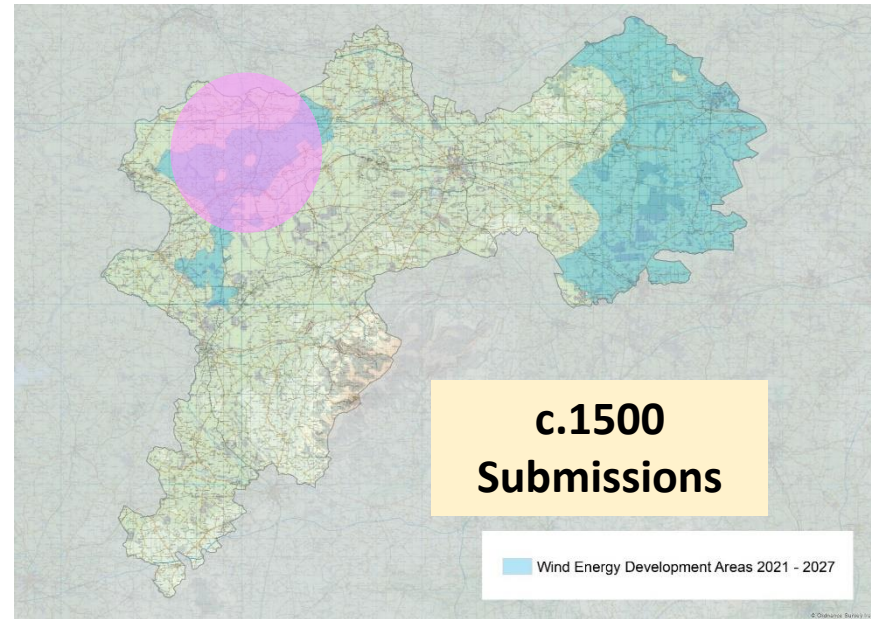
Planning applications get mixed up with the development plan review process. Members have to contend with hundreds or often thousands of submissions on the development plan.

Many submissions start with: *“We are in favour of renewable energy but (1) this is not the correct technology and / or (2) our area is not the right place”.*

Response to Proposals to Export Thousands of MW from the Midlands to the UK (2013)



Major Public Concern in Response to a Current Consultation for a Windfarm near Lemanaghan (2021)



Thank You