

Upperchurch Bat Derogation Licence Supporting Document

September 2025

This report considers the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

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Quality Assurance

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The findings outlined within this report and the data we have provided are to our knowledge true and express our bona fide professional opinions. This report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) good practice guidelines. Where pertinent CIEEM Guidelines used in the preparation of this report include the *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* (CIEEM, 2017a), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals* (CIEEM, 2017b) and *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2024). CIEEM Guidelines include model formats for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment. Also, where pertinent, evaluations presented herein take cognisance of recommended Guidance from the EPA such as *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022), and in respect of European sites, *Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2019).

Due cognisance has been given at all times to the provisions of the *Wildlife Acts 1976-2024*, the *European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations*, the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021*, EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species under *EU Regulation 1143/2014*, the *EU Birds Directive 2009/147/EC* and *Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*.

No method of assessment can completely remove the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise or incomplete information. Any limitation to the methods applied or constraints however are clearly identified within the main body of this document.

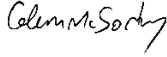
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Project Reference 2246		Title	Upperchurch Bat Derogation Licence Supporting Document	

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd. (INIS) was commissioned by Ecopower Limited to complete bat surveys at several bridge crossings, in Co. Tipperary. A 110kV transmission line will be constructed under or over each bridge. INIS were engaged to assess the suitability of the watercourse crossings for bats, and to ensure the protection of bats during any works.

This document seeks to support an application for derogation under regulation 54 & 54A of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended.

1.1. Statements of Authority

Howard Williams BSc CEnv MCIEEM CBiol MRSB MIFM is Lead Ecologist with INIS and signed off on this report. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). He is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) with the Society for the Environment (Soc Env) and a Chartered Biologist (CBiol) with the Society of Biology. Mr. Williams is principal ecologist with INIS Environmental Consultants Ltd and currently project manager on all INIS projects in the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

He has completed in excess of 100 bat surveys since 2000, held licenses to carry out bat surveys and disturb Annex II lesser horseshoe bats at roost sites. As part of his work, he has safely handled bats (Pipistrelles, Brown Long Eared and Leisler's) on occasion when they have been found on the ground during site investigations. He has also assisted with mist netting bats for scientific study under license.

Emer Hannon BSc is the Team Lead Manager with Inis and has a BSc in Ecology and Environmental Biology. She has bat surveying experience including Preliminary Roost Assessments, bat activity surveys, and she has also worked with Bat Conservation Ireland as a volunteer for the All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Surveys. She is experienced in Ecological Bird Survey techniques, both in the field and with data management. She has extensive training in team management and health and safety practices and processes. She is a Qualifying member of CIEEM.

Heather Murray BSc MSc is an Ecologist at Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd., and Assistant Team Lead for the Bat Ecology Team. Heather holds a BSc (Hons) in Animal and Conservation Biology from Edinburgh Napier University and a MSc in Environmental Management from the University of Stirling. Heather is experienced in conducting bat transects, emergence and re-entry surveys on trees and buildings, static detector deployment and bioacoustics analysis as part of her role in the bat team. She is also a qualifying member of CIEEM.

Daelyn Purcell BSc is an Ecologist within Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd., holding a BSc (Hons) in Wildlife Biology from the Institute of Technology Tralee. Daelyn's expertise lies within the area of field ecology, with six years' experience conducting various ecological surveys in line with best practice guidelines with various Ecological Consultancies and has worked on several conservation projects with BirdWatch Ireland in previous years. Daelyn is also a qualifying member of CIEEM.

Chloe Finn BSc is an Assistant Ecologist with Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd. with a BSc in Zoology from UCC. Chloe has experience conducting a wide variety of surveys including bat activity surveys (Nighttime Bat Walkovers) and roost emergence surveys, all in line with best practice guidance, as well as working with Bat Conservation Ireland, conducting nocturnal surveys along waterways to monitor

Daubenton's bat activity using bat detectors and standardized survey methods. She is a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Katie Power BSc is an Assistant Ecologist at Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd. Katie has achieved a BSc (Hons) in Wildlife Biology from the Munster Technological University, Kerry. She has completed a wide array of ecological surveys including bat emergence, transects, static detector deployment and bioacoustic analysis. Prior to joining INIS, Katie gained for nearly four years of bat survey experience through volunteering and also worked on the Natterjack toad project for NPWS.

Sarah Ní Cheallaigh BSc is an Assistant Ecologist, working predominantly within the INIS field ecology team. She graduated with a BSc in Ecology and Environmental Biology from UCC. She conducts a range of ecological surveys with INIS, including bat surveys (such as Nighttime Bat Walkover surveys and roost emergence surveys), all following standard methodologies and following Best Practice Guidance.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The Upperchurch Windfarm and Grid Connection comprises the following parts:

- Wind turbines
- Electrical Substation
- Windfarm Roads
- Crane Hardstanding Areas & Turbine Foundations
- Windfarm Ancillary Works
- Mountphilips – Upperchurch 110kV Underground Cable (110kV UGC).

The Authorised Upperchurch Windfarm comprises 22 No. wind turbines, 2 No. met masts, 22 No. turbine foundation and crane hardstanding areas, site roads and an electrical substation. The Upperchurch Windfarm site is located in the townlands of Graniera, Shevry, Knockcurraghbola Commons, Knockmaroe, Grousehall, Cummer, Foilnahan, Gleninchaveigh, Coumnagee, Coumbeg, Knocknamena Commons, Glenbeg and Seskin. This is an area 2km west of Upperchurch village and 18km to the west of Thurles, County Tipperary.

The 110kV grid connection will connect the new Mountphilips Substation to the Consented UWF Substation by 30.5km of underground cabling.

A derogation licence has previously been granted for bat inspections long the grid route; **Licence No.: DER/BAT 2022 – 123.**

There are c.60 watercourse crossings along the grid connection route, of which 14 crossings have been determined to have possible features to support roosting bats. Locations of the crossings can be seen in Figure 2.1. Four of these watercourse crossings, W33, W36, W49 and W53, were identified as having roosting bats during bat surveys carried out in 2022.

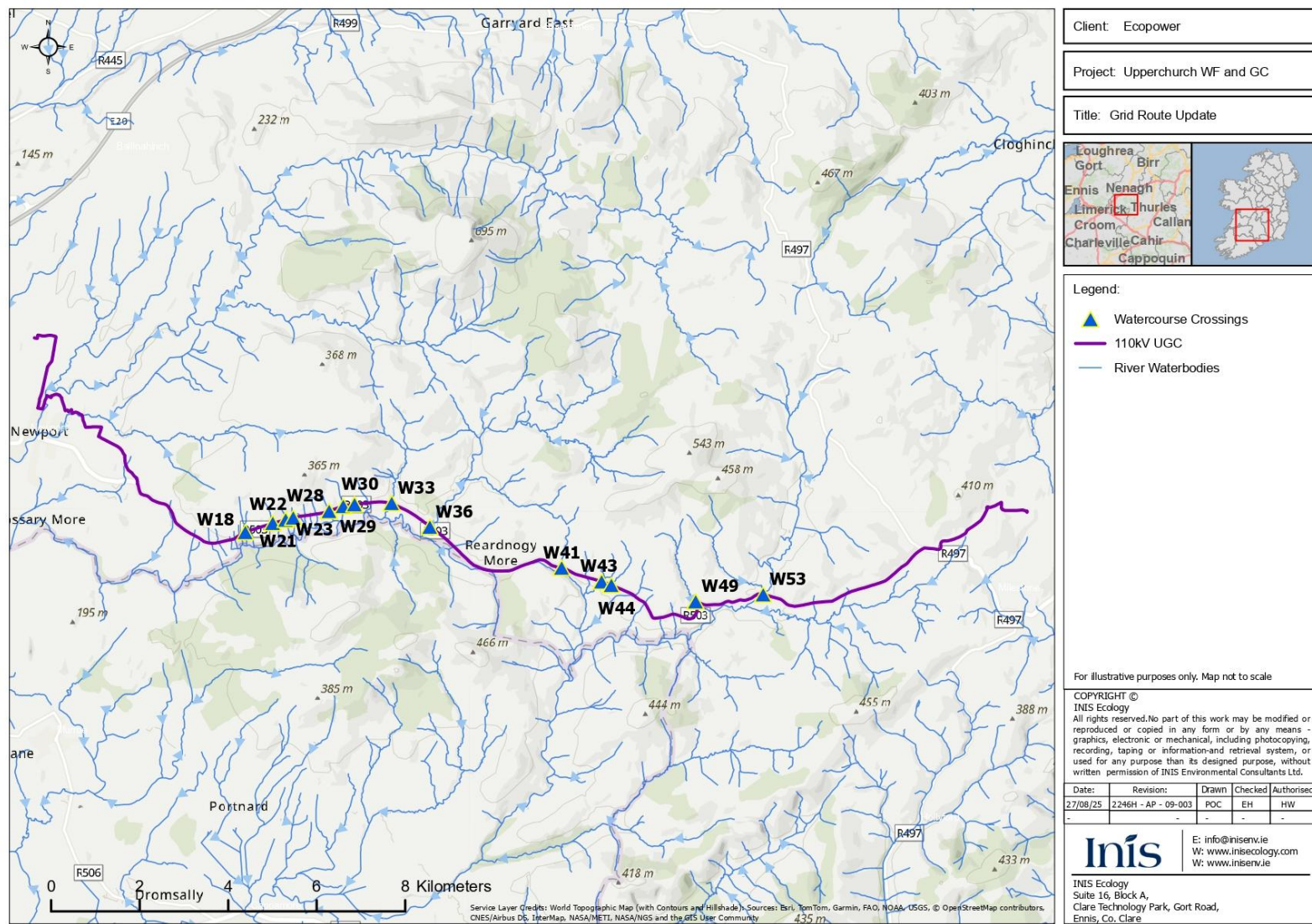


Figure 2.1 Watercourse Crossing Locations

3. PROPOSED ACTIVITY

To confirm the presence or absence of bats at the watercourse crossings, an inspection will be carried out using an endoscope.

The endoscope survey will be undertaken by an experienced ecologist in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins 2023). During inspection, the surveyor will look for direct presence of bats as well as indirect evidence such as droppings, urine staining or prey remains. Care will be taken to ensure that disturbance to any bats using the roosting feature is minimised. The endoscope will be inserted only as far as necessary to determine occupancy. Bright lights and loud noises will be avoided, and the duration of the check will be as short as possible.

4. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE DEROGATION TASKS

4.1. Test 1 – Reason for Derogation

A derogation is being sought under Regulation 54(2)(c): “) In the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”

The proposed endoscope inspections at potential bat roosting features along the grid connection are necessary to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats. All bat species in the Ireland are protected due to significant declines in their populations driven largely by habitat loss, disturbance, and fragmentation. Carrying out these surveys will contribute to an understanding of how bats are using the local environment and helps ensure they are not inadvertently harmed or displaced by the grid connection. The inspection of potential roosting sites will enable the provision of suitable mitigation measures if required. This work reflects a precautionary approach that supports the public interest in maintaining healthy bat populations and wider ecosystem integrity.

4.2. Test 2 – Absence of Alternative Solutions

The use of an endoscope to inspect the potential bat roost features at the water crossings represents the only effective method to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats within these features. The potential roosting features are internal and not visible from the exterior. External inspections alone cannot confirm whether bats are roosting within these enclosed spaces and they can't reliably identify signs such as droppings or staining inside the cavity. These checks with an endoscope are accepted as best practice for assessing small or concealed roosting features.

4.3. Test 3 – Impact of Derogation on Conservation Status

The inspections of potential bat roosts with an endoscope are minimally invasive and carried out in accordance with best practice and legal requirements. As such, the activity will have no negative effect on the conservation status of bat species in Ireland. All inspections will be undertaken by experienced ecologists following best practice guidelines to minimise disturbance to any bats using the features. Should a bat be observed during inspection or clear evidence of a roost identified the inspection will cease and the feature will be left undisturbed. This approach eliminates the risk of direct disturbance to roosting individuals. These potential roost feature inspections form part of a wider process to ensure that legally protected bat species are protected during any future works. By identifying potential roosts early, the activity directly contributes to responsible planning and mitigation, thereby supporting broader conservation goals.

5. MONITORING THE IMPACTS OF THE DEROGATIONS

They surveys will be carried out by suitably qualified ecologists. The methodology will strictly follow best practice guidance and all licence conditions.

A record of each inspection will be maintained, including:

- The exact location and type of feature inspected;
- Date, time, and weather conditions;
- Observations made (e.g. signs of bat use or absence);

These records will be submitted in a report to the NPWS, demonstrating that the activity was undertaken in full compliance with the conditions of the derogation.