APPENDIX 7

APPENDIX G OF THE GEOTECHNICAL AND PEAT STABILITY ASSESSMENT (PSA) REPORT

Appendix G

Methodology for Peat Stability Risk Assessment

Methodology for Peat Stability Risk Assessment

A peat stability risk assessment was carried out for each of the main infrastructure elements at the proposed wind farm development. This approach takes into account guidelines for geotechnical/peat stability risk assessments as given in PLHRAG (2017) and MacCulloch (2005). The degree of risk is determined as a Risk Rating (R), which is the product of probability (P) and impact (I). How these factors are determined and applied in the analysis is described below.

The main approaches for assessing peat stability include the following:

(a) Geomorphological

(b) Qualitative (judgement)

(c) Index/Probabilistic (probability)

(d) Deterministic (factor of safety)

Approaches (a) to (c) listed above would be considered subjective and do not provide a definitive indication of stability; in addition, a high level of judgement/experience is required which makes it difficult to relate the findings to real conditions. FT apply a more objective approach, the deterministic approach. As part of FT's deterministic approach, a qualitative risk assessment is also carried out taking into account qualitative factors, which cannot necessarily be quantified.

Probability

The likelihood of a peat failure occurring was assessed based on the results of both the quantitative results of stability calculations (deterministic approach using factors of safety) and the assessment of the severity of several qualitative factors which cannot be reasonably included in a stability calculation but nevertheless may affect the occurrence of peat instability.

The qualitative factors used in the risk assessment are outlined in Table A and have been compiled based on FT's experience of assessments and construction in peat land sites and peat failures throughout Ireland and the UK.

Table A Qualitative Factors used to Assess Potential for Peat Failure

Qualitative Factor	Type of Feature/Indicator for each Qualitative Factor [1]	Explanation/Description of Qualitative Factor
Evidence of sub peat water flow	No	Based on site walkover observations. Sub peat water flow generally occurs in the form of natural piping at the base of peat. Where there is a constriction or blockage in natural pipes a build-up of water can occur at the base of the peat causing a reduction in effective stress at the base of the peat resulting in failure; this is particularly critical during periods of intense rainfall.
	Possibly	
	Probably	
	Yes	
Evidence of surface water flow	Dry	Based on site walkover observations. The presence of surface water flow indicates if peat in an area is well drained or saturated and if any additional loading from the ponding of surface water onto the peat is likely.
	Localised/Flowing in drains	
	Ponded in drains	

Qualitative Factor	Type of Feature/Indicator for each Qualitative Factor [1]	Explanation/Description of Qualitative Factor
	Springs/surface water	
Evidence of previous failures/slips	No	Based on site walkover observations. The presence of clustering of relict failures may indicate that particular pre-existing site conditions predispose a site to failure.
	In general area	
	On site	
	Within 500m of location	
Type of vegetation	Grass/Crops	Based on site walkover observations. The type of vegetation present indicates if peat in an area is well drained, saturated, etc. Vegetation that indicates wetter ground may also indicate softer underlying peat deposits.
	Improved Grass/Dry Heather	
	Wet Grassland/Juncus (Rushes)	
	Wetlands Sphagnum (Peat moss)	
General slope characteristics upslope/downslope from infrastructure location	Concave	Based on site walkover observations. Slope morphology in the area of the infrastructure location is an important factor. A number of recorded peat failures have occurred in close proximity to a convex break in slope.
	Planar to concave	
	Planar to convex	
	Convex	
Evidence of very soft/soft clay at base of peat	No	Based on inspection of exposures in general area from site walkover. Several reported peat failures identify the presence of a weak layer at the base of the peat along which shear failure has occurred.
	Yes	
Evidence of mechanically cut peat	No	Based on site walkover observations. Mechanically cut peat typically cut using a 'sausage' machine to extract peat for harvesting. Areas which have been cut in this manner have been linked to peat instability. The mechanical cuts can notably reduce the intrinsic strength of the peat and also allow ingress of rainfall/surface water.
	Yes	
Evidence of quaking or buoyant peat	No	Based on site walkover observations. Quaking/buoyant peat is indicative of highly saturated peat, which would generally be considered to have a

Qualitative Factor	Type of Feature/Indicator for each Qualitative Factor (1)	Explanation/Description of Qualitative Factor
	Yes	low strength. Quaking peat is a feature on sites that have been previously linked with peat instability.
Evidence of bog pools	No	Based on site walkover observations. Bog pools are generally an indicator of areas of weak, saturated peat. Commonly where there are open areas of water within peat these can be interconnected, with the result that there may be sub-surface bodies of water. The presence of bog pools have been previously linked with peat instability.
	Yes	
Other	Varies	In addition to the above features/ indicators and based on site recordings the following are some of the features which may be identified: Excessively deep peat, weak peat, overly steep slope angles, etc.

Note (1) The list of features/indicators for each qualitative factor are given in increasing order of probability of leading to peat instability/failure.

It should be noted that the presence of one of the qualitative factors alone from Table A is unlikely to lead to peat instability/failure. Peat instability/failure at a site is generally the combination of a number of these factors occurring at the same time at a particular location. The probability rating assigned to the quantitative and qualitative factors is judged on a 5-point scale from 1 (indicating negligible or no probability of failure) to 5 (indicating a very likely failure), as outlined in Table B.

Table B Probability Scale

Scale	Factor of Safety	Probability
1	1.30 or greater	Negligible/None
2	1.29 to 1.20	Unlikely
3	1.19 to 1.11	Likely
4	1.01 to 1.10	Probable
5	≤1.0	Very Likely

Scale	Likelihood of Qualitative Factor leading to Peat Failure	Probability of Failure
1	Negligible/None	Least
2	Unlikely	
3	Probable	
4	Likely	
5	Very Likely	Greatest

Impact

The severity of the risk is also assessed qualitatively in terms of impact. The impact of a peat failure on the environment within and beyond the immediate wind farm site is assessed based on the potential travel distance of a peat failure. Where a peat failure enters a water course it can travel a considerable distance downstream. Therefore the proximity of a potential peat failure to a drainage course is a significant indicator of the likely potential impact.

The risk is determined based on the combination of hazard and impact. A qualitative scale has been derived for the impact of the hazard based on distance of infrastructure element to a watercourse (Table C).

The location of watercourses is based on topographic maps and supplemented by site observations from walkover survey. Note that not all watercourses are shown on maps.

Table C Impact Scale

Scale	Criteria	Impact
1	Proposed infrastructure element greater than 150m of watercourse	Negligible/None
2	Proposed infrastructure element within 150 to 101m of watercourse	Low
3	Proposed infrastructure element within 100 to 51m of watercourse	Medium
4	Proposed infrastructure element within 50 m of watercourse	High
5	Proposed infrastructure element within 50 m of watercourse, in an environmentally sensitive area	Extremely High

Risk Rating

The degree of risk is determined as the product of probability (P) and impact (I), which gives the Risk Rating (R) as follows:

The Risk Rating is calculated from: $R = P \times I$

Due to the 5-point scales used to assess Probability and Impact, the Risk Rating can range from 1 to 25 as shown in Table D.

Table D Qualitative Risk Rating

Impact \ Probability	1	2	3	4	5
5	5	10	15	20	25
4	4	8	12	16	20
3	3	6	9	12	15
2	2	4	6	8	10
1	1	2	3	4	5

Risk Rating & Control Measures	
17 to 25	High: avoid working in area or significant control measures required
11 to 16	Medium: notable control measures required
5 to 10	Low: only routine control measures required
1 to 4	Negligible: none or only routine control measures required

The risk rating is calculated individually for each contributory factor. Control measures are required to reduce the risk to at least a 'Low' risk rating. The control measures in response to the qualitative risk ratings are included in the peat stability risk registers for each main infrastructure element in Appendix E.