

An
Bord
Pleanála

**Pre-application consultation, Section
47B of the Transport (Railway
Infrastructure) Act 2001 as amended.**

Inspector's Report

ABP-311802-21

Development:

DART+ Coastal North (Northern Line)
involving railway improvement works
from Connolly Station to Drogheda
Station, inclusive of the Howth branch
line from Howth Junction Station to
Howth Station

Prospective Applicant:

Iarnród Éireann

Planning Authorities:

Dublin City Council
Fingal County Council
Louth County Council

Date of Consultation Meetings:

20/01/2022, 31/03/2022, 05/04/2023,
15/06/2023, 16/10/2023

Inspector:

Conor McGrath

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report relates to pre-application discussions held with Iarnród Éireann in respect of proposed improvement works to the railway line between Connolly Station, Dublin and Drogheda Station, Co. Louth, including works to the Howth Branch Line from Howth Junction to Howth Station, and associated works. These consultations were undertaken on foot of a request under S.47B of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (inserted by Section 50 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure Act) Act 2006).

This report describes the location and nature of the proposed development, the applicant's submission, the consultations held and the legal provisions relevant to the proposed development.

The Board's representatives met with the prospective applicant on five occasions. This report should be read in conjunction with the presentations provided by the prospective applicant and the written records of those meetings which are on file. It is not proposed to repeat the contents of those records in detail within this report.

2.0 SITE AND DESCRIPTION

The development relates to works to the existing commuter Dart and mainline railway between Connolly Station in Dublin City Centre and McBride Station, Drogheda, Co. Louth, as well as works along the branch line running between Howth Junction and Howth Station, over a total distance of c. 56km.

The lines are currently electrified between Connolly and Malahide and Howth stations and facilitate Dart services. North of Malahide station to Drogheda the line is not currently electrified and is served by diesel commuter and mainline train services.

The development traverses the administrative area of four local authorities, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Meath County Council and Louth County Council.

The line crosses or passes a number of protected structures, particularly within the Fingal County Council administrative area. These include the structures identified in appendix 1 to this report, including Malahide Railway Viaduct, Rogerstown Viaduct, Balbriggan Viaduct and Knocknagin / Gormanston Viaduct. One new bridge will be constructed adjacent to the Mayne River crossing, which is a protected structure. Structures at Drogheda McBride Station also have protected status.

There are two principle existing level crossings on the Howth Branch lines, at Sutton Cross and Baldoyle Road R809, with secondary / local road level crossings at Cosh Level crossing and Claremont Level crossing. The line passes through Gormanstown Military Camp, which includes a firing range.

The coastal zone is subject to a number of nature conservation designations. In particular, the proposed development passes through / over Natura 2000 sites at:

- Malahide Estuary SPA and SAC,
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA and SAC
- River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is one of four infrastructural projects to be delivered under the Dart+ programme which seeks to electrify parts of the existing rail network to facilitate an expansion of Dart services. The DART+ Programme is described as a key deliverable of national planning policy and contributes to a number of National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework and Priorities of the National Development Plan (2021-2030). It is also identified as a key action under the Climate Action Plan 2023.

The primary objective of the DART+ Programme is described as being to support compact urban growth and contribute to the reduction of transport congestion and emissions by enabling modernised high-quality commuter rail services. This is aimed at providing a safe, sustainable, efficient, integrated, and accessible public transport service along these corridors.

Sub-objectives of the DART+ Programme include:

- Cater for existing heavy rail travel demand and improve customer services through a higher frequency, higher capacity, electrified heavy rail service which supports sustainable economic development and population growth.
- Improve accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through improved inter-rail and inter-modal connectivity and integration with other public transport services.
- Enable further compact urban growth along existing rail corridors, unlock regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in the GDA.
- Deliver an efficient, sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient heavy rail network, which contributes to reduced congestion and supports the transition to a lower emissions transport system and emission reduction targets.
- Provide a higher standard of customer experience.

The proposed development relates to railway improvement and electrification works along the northern railway line from Connolly station to Drogheda station and including the branch line from Howth junction station to Howth station. The works extend for a distance of approx. 56km in total.

Project Specific Objectives

- Deliver a higher frequency, higher capacity, reliable, electrified route to enable an increased service frequency.
- Deliver solutions which improve the passenger experience where passenger infrastructure interventions are required.

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- Deliver a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient design solution including use of existing infrastructure where possible with targeted improvement works.
 - Identify cost-effective solutions.
 - Minimise adverse impacts on the natural and built environment.
 - Minimise adverse impacts on existing rail services, road users and landowners.
 - Provide efficient and cost-effective integration with other Dart+ projects.

The development comprises the following elements:

- Extension of existing 1500V DC electrification, which currently terminates at Malahide, as far as Drogheda MacBride Station (approximately 37km).
- Reconfiguration of the existing track layout and associated infrastructure in the vicinity of:
 - Drogheda MacBride Station,
 - Malahide Station,
 - Clongriffin Station and
 - Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station.

as well as sections of additional track and station turnback facilities to allow for improved operational flexibility on the Northern Line.

- Construction of a new platform at Drogheda MacBride Station.
- Works at Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station, include enhanced passenger facilities.
- Upgrades to existing signalling, telecoms and power supplies to support the planned increase in train services, including the introduction of new electrical substations (8 no.) at key locations alongside the railway line.

Works around Malahide Station include;

- A turn-back facility immediately north of Malahide Station, which requires the widening of the railway corridor on the eastern side of the existing embankment on which it is situated, over approx. 500m length.
- This facility will allow for a greater number of services to be turned back at Malahide and return toward Dublin.
- New OHLE and signalling installations and modifications to existing systems.

Works around Clongriffin Station include:

- A new passing loop to serve a platform to the east of Clongriffin station. This requirement was anticipated in the original station design and will have minimal impact on the station building / existing infrastructure.
- New bridge over the River Mayne, east of existing rail bridge (RPS 0919), and extension of the existing culvert south of the River Mayne.
- Modifications to track alignment south of the Station to allow trains to access the new platform.
- These works will allow for a greater number of services to be turned back at Clongriffin and return to Dublin City Centre.
- New OHLE and signalling installations and modifications to existing systems.

Works around Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station

- The construction of an extension to the existing Platform 2 to allow the platform to be used by services from Howth without impacting on services running along the Northern Line.
- Track modifications to include a new crossover east of the existing platforms.
- Alterations and modifications to existing OHLE, signalling and telecoms systems.
- Station facilities, such as shelters, improved for the increase in interchanging passengers.

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- The works are essential to allow trains to be turned back clear of continuing services on separate tracks.

Howth Branch Level Crossings

- The introduction of infrastructure to enable the operation of a regular shuttle service between Howth and Howth Junction & Donaghmede Stations.
- The four existing level crossings along the Howth Branch line can continue to operate while still providing a more efficient service overall.

Depot Works

- Localised works at Drogheda, Fairview and Connolly Depots to modify the facilities to cater for the change in rolling stock, predominantly internal to the buildings although they will also encompass some localised external changes to some track work and systems.
- The depot at Drogheda MacBride Station will be electrified with OHLE.

While the majority of works will take place within the existing railway boundary, over 600 no. third party landowners (plots) will be impacted. Permanent landtake will be required for:

- Substations
- Biodiversity
- Overhead OHLE
- Retaining Walls
- Station Upgrades (HJ&D)
- Temporary landtake will be required for:
- Construction compounds
- Temporary access

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- Utility Diversions
 - Access to Utility Diversions

4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The following policy documents are of relevance but, it should be noted, do not comprise an exhaustive list of such policy statements or guidance:

- TEN-T connecting Europe Facility Programme (CEF)
- Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework 2040 & National Development Plan 2018-2027
- Climate Action Plan 2023
- Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Region 2019
- Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SIFLT)
- Transport Strategy for Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
- Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan (being updated)
- Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Donabate Local Area Plan 2016-2026

5.0 MEETINGS HELD

Five meetings were held with the prospective applicant's representatives on the following dates: 20/01/2022, 31/03/2022, 05/04/2023, 15/06/2023, 16/10/2023.

Presentations were provided at each meeting which are included in the file together with other information provided to the Board in respect of same. The record of each meeting is also contained in the file.

On 08/02/2024, a request was received from the prospective applicants to close the pre-application consultations.

6.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Section 2 of the of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended by section 6 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 sets out the definition of *strategic infrastructure development*, including;

g) any proposed railway works referred to in section 37(3) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended by the *Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006*).

A subsequent application for a Draft Railway Order will be lodged under the provisions of Section 37(3) of the Transport Infrastructure Act 2001 as amended by Section 49 of Planning and Development Act (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.

7.0 OTHER RELEVANT CASES

The following comprise recent related pre-application consultations or applications which are relevant to this case:

ABP-314232-22: Concurrent Rail Order application in respect of DART+ West - Dublin City to Maynooth and M3 Parkway to the environs of Connolly Station.

The associated pre-application consultation case was ABP-314724-22.

ABP-316119-23: Concurrent Rail Order application in respect of DART+ South West - Electrified Heavy Railway Order - Hazelhatch & Celbridge Station to Heuston Station, and Heuston Station to Glasnevin. The associated pre-application consultation case was ABP-308826-22.

ABP-314724-23: Concurrent Rail Order application - Railway (Metrolink - Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order [2022] (Dublin Airport, Ballymun, Glasnevin and City Centre to Charlemont). The associated pre-application consultation case was ABP-302010-22.

Other: Several Bus Connects Schemes.

8.0 MATTERS ARISING -

8.1 Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

The matters which arose during the course of pre-application discussions include:

- Policy context surrounding the proposal ranging from strategic / national to local policy.
- Public consultation process and stakeholder engagement undertaken.
- Potential demolition / CPO / substratum works and impacts on residential properties.
- Potential impact on residential amenity from construction / operational activities.
- Potential impacts / beneficial effects to communities from changes to the frequency of commuter rail services and journey times.

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- Potential impacts on vehicular and pedestrian / cyclist traffic arising from changes to the operation of existing level crossings, and supporting modelling and analysis.
 - Potential effects on communities due to revisions to services on the Howth Branch line, and facilities at Donaghmeade / Howth Junction station.
 - Works required to bridges along the route to facilitate required clearance including potential impact on protected structures.
 - Potential effects on the setting of Protected Structures due to new bridge and OHL infrastructure, including Drogheda McBride Station.
 - Visual amenity of infrastructural elements, including OHL and retaining walls.
 - Potential impact on biodiversity, including potential significant effects on European Sites and the qualifying interests thereof, particularly wintering birds.
 - Construction compounds and substations - requirements and locations.
 - The potential interdependency on other Dart+ schemes
 - Land acquisition/CPO/substratum requirements.

8.2 Environmental Impact Assessment

It is proposed to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment Report with the proposed Draft Railway Order. The following matters were addressed during the course of the consultation meetings.

- EIA Scoping was undertaken by the prospective applicant.
- The transport modelling methodology.
- Environmental factors including but not limited to: Climate, Hydrology (incl. flood risk), Land & Soils, Noise & Vibration, Visual and Landscape, Biodiversity, Cultural Heritage, Population and Human Health, Material Assets, Traffic & Transportation.
- Consideration of Alternatives.
- Water Framework Directive.

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- Electromagnetic Assessment.
 - Construction Impacts (incl. on residential areas & transport movements).
 - Format of the EIAR.
 - Consideration of cumulative impacts and interdependencies.
 - Draft Railway Order documentation.

8.3 Appropriate Assessment

It is proposed to submit a Natura Impact Assessment Report with the proposed Draft Railway Order. The following include matters which were discussed during the consultation meetings.

- Likely Zone of Impact of the proposal.
- Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact and proximity to QI's/SCI's.
- Pathways for likely significant effects.
- Screening conclusions.
- Consideration of potential adverse effects in NIS.
- Potential Mitigation Measures to be considered.
- In-combination Effects.

8.4 Serving of a Copy of the Draft Railway Order

The provisions of section 40(1)(c) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act, 2001, as amended by section 49 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act, 2006, indicate that the Board may direct the prospective applicant as to what persons, in addition to the planning authority and the Minister for Transport, should be so served with a copy of the Draft Railway Order, accompanying documents and public notice.

In that regard I recommend that the Board consider that the persons listed hereunder be served with the draft order and accompanying documents. In forming the list hereunder, regard was had to, *inter alia*, the requirement under s.40(1)(b) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act, 2001 as amended under s.49 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act, 2006, to give the public notification of the proposed application. Regard was also had, in drawing up the list below, to the provisions of s.213 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2006.

Having due regard to this, I recommend that the Board considers that the persons and bodies listed hereunder be so served:

- Dublin City Council,
- Fingal County Council
- Meath County Council
- Louth County Council
- Minister for Transport
- Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage — Development Applications Unit (all three sections to be notified: NPWS, Architectural Heritage Protection Unit & Archaeological - National Monuments Service)
- Minister for Communications, Climate and Environment.
- Minister for Defence
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
- National Transport Authority (NTA)
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- Commission for Railway Regulation
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland

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- The Heritage Council
 - Health and Safety Authority
 - Health Service Executive
 - Irish Water
 - ESB
 - CIE (all bodies within the group to be served i.e. Dublin Bus, Bus Eireann and Iarnród Éireann)

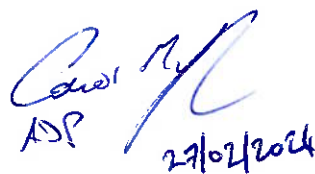
The Board may wish to review this list and satisfy itself that it is sufficient and the applicant may wish to consider other bodies they consider relevant.

3.0 CONCLUSION

By letter dated 8th February 2024 the prospective applicant wrote to the Board requesting that the pre-application process be formally concluded. I am of the opinion that the process should be concluded as requested and would recommend accordingly.

Conor McGrath

Inspectorate


ASP 27/02/2024

Appendix 1:

Protected Structures Potentially Affected (not an exclusive list of structures)

Fingal Co. Co.	Ref. 919 Rail Bridge, Grange/Maynetown, Clongriffin
	Ref. 388 Malahide Railway Station
	Ref. 423 Railway Bridge, Bissett's Strand, Malahide
	Ref. 420 Malahide Railway Viaduct
	Ref. 502 Railway Bridge, Corballis Road, Kilcrea, Donabate
	Ref. 510 and 511 Donabate Railway Station and Station Masters House
	Ref. 516 Rogerstown Viaduct
	Ref. 286 Rail Bridge, Rogerstown, Lusk
	Ref. 287 Rail Bridge, Rogerstown Lane, Lusk
	Ref. 288 Lust and Rush Railway Station
	Ref. 292 Road Bridge, Tyrrelstown Big, Lusk
	Ref. 246 Road Bridge, L1285 Road, Ballykea, Loughshinny
	Ref. 231 Rail Bridge, Dublin Road, Townparks, Skerries,
	Ref. 191 Skerries Railway station
	Ref. 880 Rail Bridge, Barnageeragh Road, Skerries
	Ref. 879 Rail Bridge, Barnageeragh Road,
	Ref. 36 Balbriggan viaduct
	Ref. 30 Balbriggan Railway Station
	Ref. 12 Railway Bridge, off Drogheda Road (R132), Bremea, Balbriggan
	Ref. 1 Knocknagin / Gormanston Viaduct, off Drogheda Road

	Ref. 546 Sutton Railway Station
	Ref. 559 Howth Railway Station
	Ref. 788 Former Signalman's House, Howth Junction Station
Meath Co. Co.	Ref. 90991 Laytown/Bettystown P Beauparc Station House Railway Station
	Ref. 91050 Gormanston Knocknagin Viaduct Railway viaduct
	Ref. 1073 Laytown Viaduct Railway Viaduct
Louth Co. Co.	RPS 21: Drogheda McBride Railway Station Wate DB-055, DB-397, DB-396, DB-398, DB-399