



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-317831-23

Development	3 No. new 110kV underground electricity circuits.
Location	Various locations in North County Dublin between Forrest Little, Belcamp, Clonshaugh and Harristown.
Planning Authority	Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council.
Applicant(s)	Electricity Supply Board
Type of Application	Application for approval under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.
Prescribed Bodies	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin Airport Authority, Inland Fisheries Ireland.
Observers	Patrick Murphy, Respond Housing Association, HPREF Ireland Horizon DAC.

Date of Site Inspection

10th December 2025.

Inspector

Barry O'Donnell

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This case concerns an application for strategic infrastructure under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. It is made on foot of pre-application discussions with the Commission under ABP-312348-22 for a development of three new 110kV circuits (Newbury-Ballystruan, Ballystruan-Forrest Little and Forrest Little-Belcamp), where the Commission decided that the development would fall within the scope of section 182A of the Act and would be strategic infrastructure.
- 1.2. The proposed development will support the proposed MetroLink development by providing a power supply between existing substations at Belcamp and Newbury and proposed substations at Forrest Little and Ballystruan.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The cable routes are located primarily within the existing road network within the administrative areas of Dublin City Council (DCC) and Fingal County Council (FCC). Each route can be summarised as follows: -
- 2.2. **Newbury to Ballystruan**
 - 2.2.1. The proposed route initially runs through private property south of the Old Airport Road, before entering an area of agricultural land and the former Quick Park facility, parallel to the Old Airport Road/Collinstown Lane and then onto the R132/Swords Road. At the M50 motorway the cable route turns east, including crossing the motorway in order to gain entry to Clonsaugh Business and Technology Park and, ultimately, the existing Newbury 110kV substation.
- 2.3. **Ballystruan to Forrest Little**
 - 2.3.1. The proposed route runs west from the proposed Ballystruan substation through Ballymun Kickhams GAA grounds onto the Harristown Road, between the DAA Blue Carpark and the Harristown Bus Station and continuing along Harristown Lane before turning north onto the R122. The route then follows the R122 north and then

turns in an easterly direction around the perimeter of the airport before joining up with the Naul Road and entering the proposed Forest Little substation adjacent to Cloghran roundabout.

2.4. **Forrest Little to Belcamp**

2.4.1. Option 1

2.4.2. The route runs from the proposed Forrest Little substation, crossing the R132 at the Cloghran roundabout onto Cloghran, travelling off road and crossing the M1 and then continuing adjacent to/alongside Stockhole Lane. At Kinsealy the route turns south onto the R107/Malahide Rd towards the Clarehall junction before turning west on the R139 and entering the existing 220kV Belcamp Station.

2.4.3. Option 2

2.4.4. The route runs similar to Option 1 as far as Stockhole Lane, at which it turns off road near Baskin Park and runs underneath the Cuckoo Stream and Clonsaugh Road, prior to turning in an easterly direction along agricultural lands prior to turning south on the approach to the existing 220kV Belcamp Station.

3.0 **Proposed Development**

3.1. The proposed development comprises electricity transmission infrastructure, in the form of three new 110kV underground cable circuits, that will serve the approved MetroLink development (which was granted by the Commission under Ref. ABP-314724-22 and which includes proposed substations at Forrest Little and Ballystruan). There are existing substations at Belcamp and Newbury and the proposed cables will allow for electricity connections between the existing and proposed substations.

3.2. The three proposed new circuits are: -

- **Newbury-Ballystruan 110kV:** a cable that measures approx. 5km and passes through the townlands of Ballymun, Coultry, Ballystruan, Turnapin, Great Dardistown, Turnapin Little, Clonsaugh (E.D. Coolock), Santry (E.D. Coolock) and Shrubs.

- **Ballystruan-Forrest Little 110kV:** a cable that measures approx. 10km and passes through the townlands of Cloghran, Forrest Little, Forrest Great, Pickardstown, Barberstown, Kingstown, Millhead, Sandyhill, Saint Margaret's, Shanganhill and Ballymun.
- **Forrest Little-Belcamp 110kV/220kV:** The cable from Forrest Little-Belcamp is presented as 2 No. different options: -
 - Option 1 routes via Baskin Lane/Malahide Road and measuring approx. 9km, passing through the townlands of Cloughran, Stockhole, Baskin, Ballymacartle, Kinsaley, Bohammer, Saintdoolaghs, Burgage, Balgriffin, Clonshaugh (E.D. Coolock) and Belcamp
 - Option 2 routes via Stockhole Lane and measures approx. 4km in length, passing through the townlands of Cloghran, Stockhole, Clonshaugh (E.D. Coolock) and Belcamp.

3.3. According to the application documents, cable trench excavations will vary from 0.6-2.9m wide and 1.4m deep and with existing ducting used where possible.

3.4. The development also includes communication links and fibreoptic cables between all substations and in the same trench; joint bays, communication chambers and link boxes along the alignment; temporary construction laydown and work areas with ancillary staff facilities and parking, temporary access tracks, passing bays and water and utility crossings; and all associated and ancillary above and below ground site development works including those related to permanent and temporary construction, roadworks, excavation and vegetation clearance.

3.5. The proposed development involves construction on private lands and the applicant points on, at Section 7 of the Application Form, that there is no requirement for landowner consent to the works as ESB has statutory powers under the Electricity Supply Act, 1927, as amended, to enter onto lands for the purpose of any works relating to electrical infrastructure.

3.6. The following documents are included as part of the application: -

- Application form;
- Cover letter;

- Notification letters;
- Copies of statutory particulars, including public notices;
- Application drawings;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (including Appendices); and
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement;

4.0 Further Information Requests and Responses

4.1. Further Information Request and Response

- 4.1.1. On 21st November 2025 the Commission requested the applicant to submit further information in respect of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement and which also addresses the potential for encountering per and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances at Dublin Airport.
- 4.1.2. The applicant submitted a Further Information Response on 26th February 2026, which included an Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (dated February 2026) and a Technical Memorandum entitled 'PFAS Strategy for HV Cables' dated 19th February 2026.

4.2. Additional Further Information Request and Response

- 4.2.1. The PFAS Strategy refers to the document 'PFAS Management Strategy for Dublin Airport' that was submitted by Transport Infrastructure Ireland as part of the MetroLink Railway Order application and which itself proposes to handle PFAS contaminated materials at a dedicated Triage and Material Management Centre (TMMC) at Dardistown.
- 4.2.2. On 23rd March 2026 the Commission requested the applicant to submit further information in respect of the TMMC, in particular providing additional drawings that identify its location and any required third party consent to the utilisation of the lands as part of the development. The applicant was also requested to submit a copy of the document PFAS Management Strategy for Dublin Airport.

- 4.2.3. The applicant submitted a Further Information Response on 7th April 2026, clarifying that they do not seek permission for works or material change of use at the TMMC, which was authorised as part of the MetroLink Railway Order. They also submitted an updated drawing (No. PE424-D2159-033-001) that includes a segregated PFAS triage area within the typical HDD compound/laydown area.

5.0 Consultations

5.1. Prescribed Bodies

- 5.1.1. Details of the application were circulated to the following Prescribed Bodies: -

- Dublin City Council;
- Fingal County Council;
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Department of Transport;
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (now known as the Dept of Climate, Energy and the Environment);
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland;
- Uisce Eireann;
- An Comhairle Ealaíon;
- Fáilte Ireland;
- An Taisce;
- The Heritage Council;
- The Commissioners of Public Works;
- Dublin Airport Authority;
- Eirgrid;
- Health Service Executive;

- Health and Safety Authority;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Eastern and Midland Regional Authority;
- National Transport Authority;
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities; and
- Commission for Railway Regulation.

5.1.2. Responses were received from FCC, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin Airport Authority and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

5.2. Planning Authorities

5.2.1. Fingal County Council

5.2.2. FCC made submissions dated 5th October 2023 and 27th March 2024.

5.2.3. The 5th October 2023 contains a detailed commentary on the application and also includes internal reports from the Transportation, Environment (Waste), Conservation, Environmental Health (Air & Noise Unit) and Water Services sections at Appendix 1, together with reports received from the Health Service Executive and Health and Safety Executive at Appendix 2. The submission can be summarised as follows: -

- The development would generally comply with policy regarding provision of infrastructural services to appropriately zoned lands in a timely manner. As an element of the electricity network, it is supported by specified national, regional and local planning policies.
- The cables route interacts with seven zoning objectives: -
 - Greenbelt, High Technology, Rural Village, General Employment, Open Space, Residential Area and Residential.
- Other relevant map-based policies and objectives include: -
 - Site is in the low-lying agricultural landscape character area

- Site is within the 250m catchment area for Castlemoate House Historic Landfill (PR No. PR4608)
- Section of the route is within the 250m catchment area of Belcamp Lane (PR No. PR408) Historic Landfill.
- The end section of the route runs through Belcamp Lane Historic Landfill.
- Section runs through National Monuments Constraints buffer area at St. Doulagh's Church & Well and St. Catherine's Well (RPS No. 459)
- Site is in proximity to a holy well (RPS No.608) on Stockhole Lane.
- Section of the route runs through a Parks Biodiversity River Buffer on the R107.
- Section of the route runs parallel to the Balgriffin burial site and Kinsealy burial site on the R107.
- Key core bus corridors are located along the R139.
- Site lies in the vicinity of a development plan road proposal.
- Some sections of the route are located in Flood Zones A and B
- Financial contributions: -
 - The development is considered to be exempt from a requirement for a financial contribution under the S48 development contribution scheme and there is no S49 scheme that would affect the development.
 - The planning authority would support the imposition of a condition towards financing an education and awareness programme in respect of renewable energy and energy conservation for the community in this area, under the terms of Section 182B(6) of the Act.
 - A bond is requested to ensure that reinstatement works are undertaken to a satisfactory standard.
- The Transport Planning Section has no objection, subject to the following conditions: -

- Final details of the scheme transport management plan to be agreed prior to construction.
- Construction details of the pipeline, where it crosses the proposed east-west distributor road, in particular with reference to the depth of cover shall be agreed prior to commencement of development.
- Necessary FCC or TII consents shall be in place prior to commencement of construction.
- Design details of the M1 crossing shall be agreed in writing with FCC and the NTA prior to commencement of construction.
- Any damage to the pavement of the national road shall be rectified in accordance with TII Pavement Standards, with details to be agreed prior to commencement of development.
- The Conservation Section raises the following concerns: -
 - The proposed route moves from the public road into a field at Stockhole Lane at the point where a Holy Well (RPS No. 608) is located. Consideration needs to be given to the watercourse connected to the well and other tree/bush connections, not just its physical structure. The route is considered to be too close to the well and should be altered, to avoid the well altogether.
 - The scheme should protect historic masonry bridges from damage during construction and operation, in the context of CDP objective HCA048 which seeks retention and repair/maintenance of these structures within the county. It is further suggested that it would be appropriate for a conservation accredited engineer to undertake condition surveys and to develop additional necessary mitigation, rather than the project archaeologist as is proposed by the EIAR.
 - Clarification should be sought as to whether consideration was given to the inclusion of protective measures for a historic iron milestone (RPS No. 462) at Malahide Road, Balgriffin or if it was seen as unnecessary due to the position of the cable route.

- Consultation should take place with the community that uses St. Doolagh's Church prior to installation of protective mitigation at this location, which may impede access. Comments should also be sought from the Heritage Office and National Monuments Service regarding this site, where archaeological investigations have revealed extensive remains with an enclosure that extends across both sides of Malahide Road.
- Waste management: No objection subject to preparation of a construction and demolition resource waste management plan.
- Water services: No objection.
- A number of planning conditions are recommended, a number of which require engagement and agreement with the planning authority in relation to matters of detail.

5.2.4. The further submission advises that Fingal Co. Co. has no further comments on the application.

5.2.5. Dublin City Council

5.2.6. No responding submission was received.

5.3. **Other Prescribed Bodies**

5.3.1. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU)

5.3.2. The DAU made a submission dated 18th October 2023, commenting in relation to archaeology and advising as follows: -

- There is broad agreement with the findings of the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage assessment presented within the EIAR.
- Conditions are recommended pertaining to (1) implementation of proposed mitigation within the EIAR, (2) appointment of a project archaeologist, (3) inclusion of archaeological and cultural heritage constraints within the CEMP, and (4) provision of a final archaeological report to the planning authorities and the Department that describes the results of monitoring and investigative work required

5.3.3. Dublin Airport Authority

5.3.4. The DAA made a submission dated 5th October 2023, advising of the risk to safe aviation operations at Dublin Airport and requesting that a condition be attached to any grant of permission that requires the developer to engage with DAA and AirNav Ireland in order to satisfy aviation related safeguarding requirements.

5.3.5. Inland Fisheries Ireland

5.3.6. Inland Fisheries Ireland made a submission dated 15th September 2023, which advises of its statutory functions and responsibilities in respect of the protection of the aquatic environment. It makes the following comments in relation to the proposed development: -

- The Mayne River adjacent to the subject site is currently at 'poor' status and non-salmonid.
- The Santry River is currently at 'poor' status and salmonid.
- The Cuckoo Stream and Forrest Little Stream are non-salmonid.
- Many of the proposed trench sites are adjacent to smaller watercourses that contribute to downstream habitat. These waters have the potential to transfer pollutants/contaminants unless appropriate safeguards are put in place.
- The crossing of important fisheries waters in order to connect to the national grid may require IFI consent.
- In-stream works require IFI's written approval.
- Detailed advice is provided in relation to consenting requirements and the design of temporary and permanent crossings, together with other generalised advice relating to the protection of receiving waters during construction. Of particular note, IFI advise that an Environmental Management Plan and Pollution Control Plan should be prepared and implemented.
- Works should also be carried out in accordance with IFI guidance relating to protection of fisheries during construction work in and adjacent to waters and urban watercourse riparian zone protection.

5.4. Submissions

5.4.1. Respond Housing Association

5.4.2. The Respond Development Department made a submission on 19th September 2023, identifying that they own an apartment development at Carr's Lane, Belcamp. The submission raises the following issues: -

- Proposed works will be carried out within the root protection area of mature trees that are in the landscaped area to the front of the apartment building. Respond seeks assurances that correct techniques are employed and that there will be no direct impact on these trees.
- Assurances are sought regarding protection measures for foul and stormwater drainage and mains water elements that are located on Malahide Road and that continuity of service will be maintained at all times. Any unavoidable disruption shall be communicated and including giving of sufficient notice.

5.4.3. HPREF Ireland Horizon DAC

5.4.4. A submission was made by John Spain Associates planning consultants, on behalf of HPREF Ireland Horizon DAC, the owner of Horizon Logistics Park, Swords. The submission supports MetroLink and associated infrastructure but submits that the cables alignment section from Forrest Little to Ballystruan will prejudice the development potential of some of the lands at Horizon Logistics Park. The route should be amended (moved further north) in order to remove an impingement on the observer's lands.

5.4.5. Patrick Murphy

5.4.6. A submission was received from Stephen Mason Architectural and Planning Services, on behalf of Patrick Murphy with an address at 19 Turnapin Cottages, Cloghran. The submission seeks assurance that there will be no high voltage cables crossing into the observer's property and that no part of the observer's property will be required as part of any wayleave. The submission also requests that the cables should not impact on future development options within the observer's rear garden.

5.5. Applicant's Response to Submissions

5.5.1. The Applicant made submissions on 6th November 2023 and 6th February 2024, in response to the submissions received. The contents of the submissions are summarised below.

5.5.2. Submission dated 6th November 2023: -

- The DAA submission suggests that there is a risk to safe aviation operations at the Airport. ESB has consulted with the DAA during preparation of the application and is willing to accept a condition as suggested by the DAA submission.
- Regarding Respond's concerns over impacts on trees/landscaping and water supply/drainage at their property on Carr's Lane, ESB will engage with the observer during the detailed design and construction stages to address the issues raised.
- Comments provided by Inland Fisheries Ireland are of a general nature and seek to protect water quality. ESB has consulted with IFI during preparation of the application and is willing to accept a condition as suggested by IFI, that construction be carried out as per IFI Guidelines.
- Regarding the Department's submission, ESB has consulted with the National Monuments Service during application preparation and is willing to accept a condition as suggested by the NMS.
- Regarding the FCC submission, the issues raised by internal departments, in particular by the Conservation Officer, have been considered within the EIAR and are addressed by mitigation measures or will be addressed during the detailed design and construction stages, as is common for projects of this nature. Comments are also provided on FCC's suggested conditions as follows: -
 - Conditions 1-3, 5, 6, 9: ESB has no objection to these conditions.
 - Condition 4a: Part A of the condition is inappropriate and should be omitted. It is likely and common that underground cabling works will be required to take place at night.

- Condition 4(e), (f) and (g): The conditions are inappropriate and should be omitted. The primary function of the cables is to facilitate the transmission of electricity and operational noise and air emissions are inherently minimal.
- Condition 7: ESB has no objection to the condition but it is not necessary as a public water/wastewater connection is not anticipated.
- Condition 8: ESB does not object to the condition but the timing of part b is not necessarily practical for a project that will be undertaken over an extended period.
- Condition 10: The FCC submission states that the project is exempt from financial contributions. As such, ESB suggests this condition should not be attached.
- Condition 11: The condition is unnecessary, where the proposal is an ancillary project to provide electricity to the MetroLink project.

5.5.3. The submission dated 6th February 2024 responds to the observations of HPREF Dublin Office DevCo and Patrick Murphy and can be summarised as follows: -

- HPREF Dublin Office DevCo
 - The proposed cable route at the back of Horizon Logistics Park was chosen after the consideration of several other options. Factors that influenced the proposed route include the presence of a c.5m high berm, that would require extensive overburden removal, and the presence of a local stream and a 110kV electric cable (Finglas-Dardistown 110kV route) to the north of this berm
 - Alternative routes through Horizon Logistics Park were considered but are less favourable due to traffic disruption, the location of existing services and the busy Harristown bus depot to the east.
- Patrick Murphy
 - The cable section referenced in the observation will utilise a spare circuit of ducting within a previously installed project, the Dardistown-Kilemore 110kV cable, that was installed in 2008 with the landowner's agreement. It is not

proposed to take additional lands at this location, given the pre-existing cable ducts.

5.6. Further Submissions

5.6.1. Following receipt of the Further Information submissions, documentation was circulated to the Third Parties and responding submissions were received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Fingal Co. Co, Dublin City Council and the Dublin Airport Authority. Each submission is summarised below.

5.6.2. Submission by Fingal Co. Co

5.6.3. FCC made a further submission dated 7th May 2026, advising that it has no further comments on the application.

5.6.4. Submission by Dublin City Council

5.6.5. DCC made a detailed submission dated 15th May 2026, having not made a submission as part of the initial consultation. The submission encompassed the entire application and it can be summarised as follows: -

- The cable route encompasses lands zoned Z6 (employment/enterprise), Z14 (strategic development and regeneration areas) and also encompasses public roads and pedestrian areas that are not zoned. As a public service installation, the development is permissible under the Z6 and Z14 zonings.
- The cable route runs proximate to RPS Nos. 1907 (Woodlands House), 1908 (Glasshouse at Woodlands House) and 4862 (Granite milestone with cast-iron plaque). The river Santry and the Santry River Valley Park have a Conservation Area Objective. These lands are also subject of the Santry River Restoration and Greenway Project.
- The proposed cable infrastructure development will provide a suitable and sufficient power source to facilitate the MetroLink project and is generally consistent with the policies and objectives as contained within the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028. It is consistent with objectives relating to addressing climate change and is also consistent with the Ballymun Local Area Plan.

- The project is not considered to adversely affect the visual amenity of the area.
- Where works cannot be realigned outside of root protection areas to avoid impact then all works shall be carried out in accordance with BS 5837 and under the supervision of an appointed arboriculturist.
- The Archaeology Section noted that that the ongoing excavation of an early medieval cemetery, at Clonsaugh Business and Technology Park (License Ref. 23E0401), is located within the area of the Newbury to Ballystruan proposed 110kV cable route.
- A Construction Plan should be agreed with the Planning Authority once a contractor has been appointed.
- The Air Quality Monitoring and Noise Control Unit advises that the developer should adhere to Dublin City Council's Construction and Demolition Good Practice Guide for Construction Sites.
- The Drainage Planning, Policy & Development Control section requires that mitigation contained within Chapter 9 of the EIS shall be implemented in full.
- Public surface water sewer records are indicative and must be verified on site. There is a large diameter surface water sewer running under the R107/Malahide Road north of the junction with the R139 that is not indicated on the records.
- A construction phase traffic management plan should be agreed with the planning authority once a contractor is appointed.
- Submission recommends a number of conditions, should the Commission grant permission.

5.6.6. The submission includes a number of internal reports prepared by: -

- Archaeology Section – conditions recommended.
- Air Quality Monitoring and Noise Control Section - conditions recommended.
- Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services - conditions recommended.
- Environment & Transport Section - conditions recommended.
- Drainage Planning, Policy & Development Control - conditions recommended.

- 5.6.7. Submission by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- 5.6.8. The DAU made a further submission dated 15th May 2026, requesting a condition be attached to any grant of permission, requiring the applicant to submit a preventative strategy for Protected Structures to the local authority for approval.
- 5.6.9. Submission by Dublin Airport Authority
- 5.6.10. DAA made a further submission dated 15th May 2026, requesting a condition be attached to any grant of permission, requiring the applicant to engage with both DAA and AirNav Ireland in relation to aviation-related safeguarding requirements.

6.0 Planning History

6.1. MetroLink (ABP-314724-22)

- 6.1.1. Transport Infrastructure Ireland lodged a Railway Order application on 30th September 2022, under Section 37 of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001, for railway works and works necessary for the construction of a railway designated as MetroLink, including the construction of a fully segregated and automated railway that runs mostly underground over a distance of c.18.8km in length and with 16 No. stations running from north of Swords at Estuary through Swords, Dublin Airport, Ballymun, Glasnevin and the City Centre to Charlemont in the south of Dublin City Centre.
- 6.1.2. The Commission granted the Railway Order on 30th September 2025, subject to 31 No. conditions.

6.2. Infrastructure Projects that Interact with the Proposed Development

- 6.2.1. BusConnects Swords to City Centre (ABP-317121-23)
- 6.2.2. The National Transport Authority lodged a planning application on 12th May 2023, under Section 51(2) of the Roads Act 1993, for a transport scheme that comprises a bus corridor and which provides for both cycle and bus priority measures over a distance of 12km along the R132/Swords Road from Pinnock Hill to Parnell Square.

- 6.2.3. The Commission granted permission on 19th June 2024, subject to 22 No. conditions.
- 6.2.4. Greater Dublin Drainage Project (ABP-301908-18 and ABP-312131-21)
- 6.2.5. The Greater Dublin Drainage Project comprises a number of individual components, including a new WWTP and sludge hub centre at Clonshaugh, an orbital sewer route from Blanchardstown to the Clonshaugh WWTP, a proposed North Fringe sewer diversion, a proposed pumping station at Abbotstown, a proposed WWTP outfall approx. 1km north-east of Ireland's Eye and an extension of an existing culvert of the River Mayne.
- 6.2.6. The Commission's decision to grant permission on Ref. ABP-301908-18 was quashed by the High Court on 4th May 2021 and was remitted to the Commission for reconsideration, under Ref. ABP-312131-21. The Commission granted permission for ABP-312131-21 on 9th July 2025, subject to 16 No. conditions.
- 6.3. North Irish Sea Array Offshore Wind Farm (ABP-319866-24)
- 6.3.1. The North Irish Sea Array Windfarm Ltd submitted an application under Section 291 of the Act for an offshore wind farm off the coast of counties Dublin, Meath and Louth, comprising of (Option 1) 49 No. turbines with a tip height of 290m or (Option 2) 35 No. turbines with a tip height of 311/316m. The development includes substations at Bremore, Co. Dublin and offshore and onshore cable circuits that will ultimately allow for connection to the National Grid at Belcamp substation.
- 6.3.2. There is no decision on this application at the time of writing.
- 6.4. Upgrades at Belcamp 220kV Substation (F23A/0040)
- 6.5. FCC granted permission to Eirgrid in December 2023 for upgrades to the existing Belcamp substation, comprising an additional GIS building, additional transformer infrastructure and associated elements.
- 6.6. East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade (ABP-319422-24)
- 6.6.1. Eirgrid submitted an application under Section 182A(1) of the Act for the laying of approximately 37.5km of new 400 kV underground cable between the existing Woodland Substation, Batterstown, Co. Meath and the existing Belcamp Substation, Clonshaugh, Co. Dublin. The development also included temporary and permanent

access tracks, jointing bays, construction compounds and necessary crossings. Upgrades to the 400kV Woodland Substation and 220kV Belcamp Substation were also included as part of the application.

- 6.6.2. The Commission granted permission on 5th February 2025, subject to 14 No. conditions.

6.7. Underground circuit between Belcamp and Darndale substations (ABP-303687-19)

- 6.7.1. Amazon Data Services Ireland Ltd submitted an application under Section 182A(1) of the Act for the installation of an underground double circuit 110kV transmission cable from the existing Belcamp 220kV/110kV substation, to the then under construction 110kV Darndale substation.

- 6.7.2. The Commission granted permission for the development on 8th August 2019, subject to 9 No. conditions.

6.8. 110kV AIS Tail-fed substation and 110kV grid connection to Finglas substation (ABP-318677-23)

- 6.8.1. Energia Solar Holdings Ltd submitted an application under Section 182A(1) of the Act for the construction of a tail-fed 110kV substation in Fieldstown, to connect to Finglas substation via 110kV underground cables.

- 6.8.2. The Commission granted permission for the development on 29th January 2025, subject to 18 No. conditions.

7.0 Policy Context

- 7.1. As has been set out, the proposed development is directly linked to the MetroLink project and, as such, the relevant policy context is set out below in this context.

7.2. European Policy

- 7.2.1. The Ten-T Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament and Council, adopted on 13th June 2024, relates to guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.
- 7.2.2. Article 34(1)(a) requires that Member States shall ensure that:

“the airports of the trans-European transport network with a total annual passenger traffic volume of more than 12 million passengers are connected to the trans-European railway network, including the high-speed railway network where possible, allowing long distance services by 31 December 2040, except where specific geographic or significant physical constraints prevent such connections.”

- 7.2.3. The Irish Rail railway from Northern Ireland to Dublin to Cork is identified in the Ten-T Regulation as part of the Core trans-European rail network.

7.3. National Policy

7.3.1. National Planning Framework

- 7.3.2. The NPF, updated and revised in April 2025, provides a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for people, and to protect and enhance the environment.
- 7.3.3. In identifying the critical importance of Dublin’s continued performance, it identifies a number of key growth enablers for the City, including: -
- Delivering the key transport projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area including DART+, MetroLink, Luas expansion, BusConnects Dublin and key elements of the metropolitan area cycle network, inclusive of commuter routes and urban greenways, and
 - Improving access to Dublin Airport, to include improved public transport access, connections from the road network from the west and north and in the longer term, consideration of heavy rail access to facilitate direct services from the national rail network in the context of potential future electrification.
- 7.3.4. The NPF contains a large number of policies, National Policy Objectives, NPO 71 of which is relevant to the proposed development. It states: -
- “Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including supporting the delivery of renewable electricity generating development.”
- 7.3.5. The NPF also contains a number of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), a number of which are relevant to the MetroLink development. They include NSO1 ‘Compact

Growth', NSO4 'High-Quality International Connectivity', NSO5 'Sustainable Mobility' and NSO8 'Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society'.

7.3.6. National Development Plan Review 2025

7.3.7. The National Development Plan (NDP) Review 2025 sets out departmental capital ceilings to 2030 and overall capital investment out to 2035. It states that it is the plan to secure Ireland's future, to transform the country, build more housing, upgrade water and energy infrastructure, deliver more roads, and provide better public transport.

7.3.8. The NDP notes that ongoing population growth, as well as demographic changes, will continue to generate demand for infrastructure across a wide range of sectors, presenting both challenges and opportunities to be addressed in terms of supply.

7.3.9. In relation to 'Low Carbon Transport', the NDP states that:

"The Government has identified the need to provide support for the development of low carbon transport projects such as Metrolink before 2030. Given the unique scale of the Metrolink, Government has decided to fund it from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund. The funding approach will allow the ambitious pipeline of other public transport projects."

7.3.10. Under the heading of 'NDP Priority Infrastructure', it is stated that:

"The revised NDP Transport investment levels of €24.33 billion will support further expansions of key Transport programmes over the next five years. There will be provision of €2 billion for the commencement of Metrolink construction.

Government will support Metrolink's construction through funding from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund."

7.3.11. Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended

7.3.12. Section 3(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, states that the State shall, so as to reduce the extent of further global warming, pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. This is referred to in the Act as the "national climate objective".

7.3.13. Section 15 of the Act sets out the duties of certain bodies (i.e. the Commission in this instance) with respect to climate. It states that the relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with:

- a) the most recent approved climate action plan,
- b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,
- c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,
- d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and
- e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State

7.3.14. Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction 2024

7.3.15. Preparation of a Long-Term Climate Strategy is a requirement of national, EU and international law. The 2024 strategy is stated to be the first prepared under the national Climate Act and it sets out Ireland's 2050 climate action targets and describes sector-specific pathways to reaching those targets.

7.3.16. Section 8.4 of the Strategy relates to 'Transport'. It notes that the population of Ireland is expected to reach 5.7 million by 2040 from a current estimate of 5.1 million in 2022. In parallel, over the next two decades there are projections of both employment and economic growth that may stimulate greater transport activity and demand. The Strategy states that without systemic and transformative changes in travel patterns, modal share, and technology, a growth in current transport activity and demand will further diminish our national competitiveness, quality of life, and decarbonisation goals.

7.3.17. Among the identified challenges facing decarbonisation are:

- In the absence of suitable alternatives to the car at a national level, a cultural mindset has been embedded over decades whereby only car ownership is associated with perceptions of freedom and convenience – this is partly a result of our settlement patterns and previous policy-making;
- How to decouple travel demand from economic growth;

- How to address transport poverty while achieving decarbonisation of the sector;
- Addressing the significant lead-in times associated with the delivery of major transport infrastructure and rollout of additional public transport services as attractive and compelling alternatives to private car use.

7.3.18. Under the heading of ‘Pathway to 2030’, the Strategy states that:

“As well as continuing the technology improvements previously committed to, demand reduction with modal shift will play an important role in the development of a more sustainable transport system over the next decade. Government investment in public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure, along-side the provision of increased public transport services and shared mobility options, will help to reduce reliance on private cars and address congestion in our cities. This investment is essential if we are to meet the level of system and behavioural change required to deliver on our climate ambition (including targets of a 50% increase in daily active travel journeys and a 130% increase in daily public transport journeys by 2030).”

7.3.19. Climate Action Plans 2024 and 2025

7.3.20. The Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2025 is the most recent CAP update at the time of completion of this report. I note that Section 3.1 states that “in contrast to previous iterations of the Climate Action Plan, CAP25 is to be read in conjunction with CAP24”.

7.3.21. CAP 2025 states that it outlines the strategies necessary to progress towards the goals re-affirmed in the Government’s Programme for Government of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and reaching climate neutrality by no later than 2050.

7.3.22. The Executive Summary states, in relation to ‘Transport’, that:

“Emissions in the transport sector increased by 0.3% in 2023, as the rebound in emissions since the Covid pandemic plateaus. Remaining within the sectoral emissions ceiling would now require an unprecedented 12.4% decrease in emissions in both 2024 and 2025. Key targets to further reduce emissions include a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled relative to business-as-usual, a 50% reduction in fuel usage, and significant increases to sustainable transport

trips and modal share. Fleet electrification and the use of biofuels will continue to provide the greatest share of emissions abatement in the medium term.”

7.3.23. Chapter 14 relates to Transport but does not contain any actions or policy specifically relevant to MetroLink, however; the equivalent Chapter 14 of the CAP 2024 states that the fundamental challenge for the transport sector is decoupling the direct correlation between transport emissions and wider social and economic activity. The focus is therefore on pursuing measures to address travel demand including measures that promote greater efficiency in the transport system and significant investment in sustainable alternatives.

7.3.24. The CAP utilises a hierarchical Avoid-Shift-Improve approach to transport decarbonisation, underpinned by transport modelling undertaken by the NTA and utilising their Regional Modelling System.

7.3.25. One of the ‘Shift’ measures in the 2024 CAP is the major public transport infrastructure programme. The 2024 CAP states that:

“Significant investment in new public transport infrastructure is required to deliver on our carbon emissions reduction targets, and to provide people with the sustainable alternatives to private car usage. Major public transport projects and programmes that are being progressed under the National Development Plan include MetroLink, DART+, BusConnects programmes in all five cities and commuter rail programmes in Cork and Limerick, which have been progressing through major delivery milestones.”

7.3.26. It goes on to state that:

“Meeting the levels of behavioural change and modal shift from private car usage required to meet our climate targets will require large-scale expansion of our public transport services.”

7.3.27. National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

7.3.28. The National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) is the Department of Transport’s framework for prioritising future investment in the land transport network to support the delivery of the NPF’s National Strategic Outcomes.

7.3.29. It states that “to cater for rising travel demand while decarbonising the transport sector, we will invest significantly in sustainable mobility. This will include major public transport schemes in our cities...”.

7.3.30. Section 2.4 of NIFTI ‘delivering clean, low-carbon and environmentally sustainable mobility’ states that:

“While ensuring surface access to ports and airports is primarily a question of facilitating the efficient movement of economic activity, NIFTI will support the development of sustainable mobility options for private passengers to access strategic links, such as progressing the MetroLink project.”

7.3.31. Section 3 of NIFTI seeks to identify the challenges. Key Transport Challenge 9 ‘ensuring the future capacity of key strategic links to Ireland’s international gateways’ states that:

“A growing population will put increased pressure on these key international gateways. There are also planned capacity expansions at Dublin airport, Dublin port and Shannon Foynes port. An increase in the public transport modal share of travel to these facilities through projects such as MetroLink will be crucial to maintaining adequate surface access and ensuring sufficient capacity on key strategic links for freight.”

7.3.32. National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022

7.3.33. The purpose of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy is to set out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland’s overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade. The target is to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys and a 10% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars by 2030 in line with metrics for transport set out in the Climate Action Plan 2021.

7.3.34. The foreword to the Policy states that:

“Increased funding under the National Development Plan will allow us to improve and expand walking, cycling and public transport options across the country to enable access to education, health care, work, cultural and public life by sustainable modes of travel. This will include commencing delivery of

BusConnects programmes in our five cities, DART+ and Metrolink in Dublin along with increased investment in the inter-urban and regional rail network.”

7.3.35. All-Island Strategic Rail Review 2024

7.3.36. The All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR), published in July 2024, was jointly commissioned by the Department of Transport in Ireland and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The Review seeks to inform policy and future strategy for the railways in both jurisdictions.

7.3.37. Among the key challenges and constraints identified by the Review is the following:

“No major airport on the island is currently served by passenger rail services. Only Kerry and George Best Belfast City Airports are currently served by the rail network, and these do not have direct connections to terminal buildings. Dublin Airport is the busiest airport in Europe without a railway or metro station.”

7.3.38. MetroLink is identified as one of a number of committed and proposed interventions.

7.3.39. National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

7.3.40. The NBAP sets out the following 5 No. objectives which have numerous supporting targets and actions:

- Objective 1: Adopt a Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach to Biodiversity.
- Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs.
- Objective 3: Secure Nature’s Contribution to People.
- Objective 4: Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity.
- Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland’s Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

7.3.41. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 introduced a new public sector duty on biodiversity. Section 59B states that every public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the objectives and targets in a National Biodiversity Action Plan. An Bord Pleanála is included in the list of ‘public bodies’ under section 59H for the purposes of that Part of the Act.

7.3.42. The impact of development on biodiversity, including species and habitats, can be assessed at a European, National and Local level and is taken into account in the Commission's decision-making having regard to the Habitats and Birds Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive and other relevant legislation, strategy and policy where applicable.

7.4. Regional Policy

7.4.1. Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019 – 2031

7.4.2. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019 – 2031 (RSES), published by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future development and to better manage regional planning and economic development throughout the Region. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.

7.4.3. The RSES contains 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs), including:

- **RSO 6:** Integrated Transport and Land Use – Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning.
- **RSO 9:** Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy – Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables-focussed energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.
- **RSO 14:** Global City Region – Promote Dublin as a global city region and protect and enhance international connectivity, including ports and airports and promote the Region as a gateway to Ireland.
- **RSO 15:** Enhanced Strategic Connectivity – Protect and enhance international connectivity and regional accessibility to support economic development, build economic resilience and support strengthened rural communities and economies including the blue-green economy and tourism.

7.4.4. The following Regional Policy Objectives are noted:

- **RPO 5.2:** Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, Bus Connects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network and ensure that future
- **RPO 5.3:** Future development in the Dublin Metropolitan Area shall be planned and designed in a manner that facilitates sustainable travel patterns, with a particular focus on increasing the share of active modes (walking and cycling) and public transport use and creating a safe attractive street environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **RPO 8.8:** The RSES supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2¹, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.
- **RPO 8.18:** Improved access to Dublin Airport is supported, including Metrolink and improved bus services as part of BusConnects, connections from the road network from the west and north. Improve cycle access to Dublin Airport and surrounding employment locations. Support appropriate levels of car parking and car hire parking.

7.4.5. Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022 – 2042

7.4.6. The Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042 (GDATS) sets out the framework for investment in transport infrastructure and services over the next two decades to 2042. MetroLink is identified in Section 2.7 as one of the ‘forthcoming schemes’ and is further described in Section 12.3.2 as ‘a long-standing objective of transport planning in Dublin...The current MetroLink project has been identified as the most advantageous way to serve critical levels of transport demand on this corridor.’

7.5. Local Policy

7.5.1. Fingal County Council Administrative Area

¹ The rail projects contained in Table 8.2 of the RSES include “complete construction of Metrolink from Swords to Sandyford, including underground extensions to UCD and Knocklyon from Charlemont”.

7.5.2. Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029

7.5.3. The Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029 (FCDP) was adopted and came into effect following lodgement of the application.

7.5.4. The cable route alignment primarily routes along public roads, but there are instances where it interacts with the following land use zonings: -

- Dublin Airport – ‘Ensure the efficient and effective operation and development of the Airport in accordance with an approved Local Area Plan.’
- General Employment – ‘Provide opportunities for general enterprise and employment.’
- Greenbelt – ‘Protect and provide for a Greenbelt.’
- High Technology – ‘Provide for office, research and development and high technology/high technology manufacturing type employment in a high quality built and landscaped environment.’
- Open Space – ‘Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities.’
- Residential Area – ‘Provide for new residential communities subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure.’
- Residential – ‘Provide for residential development and protect and improve residential amenity.’
- Rural Village – ‘Protect and promote the character of the Rural Village and promote a vibrant community in accordance with an approved land use plan, and the availability of physical and community infrastructure.’

7.5.5. Under each of the Dublin Airport, General Employment, High Technology, Residential Area, Residential and Rural Village zonings ‘utility installations’ is a permitted in principle use.

7.5.6. The Greenbelt and Open Space zonings do not contain any reference to ‘utility installations’. Section 13.1 of the CDP states that in such circumstances the acceptability of the proposal under these zonings falls to be considered on its individual merits, in terms of its contribution towards the achievement of the zoning objective and vision.

7.5.7. The following interactions with other map-based policies are noted:

- Interaction with MetroLink route at Dardistown and Dublin Airport,
- Interaction with road proposals at Dardistown, Silloge, Cloghran and Clonsaugh,
- Interaction with Framework Plan boundary at Silloge and Local Area Plan boundaries at Dublin Airport and Kinsaley,
- Interaction with the GDA Cycle network plan at various locations,
- Interaction with Local Objective Points at various locations,
- Interaction with Protected Structures and archaeological site records at various locations

7.5.8. Other relevant CDP policies and objectives include:

- **Policy CSP29 – Promote and Facilitate MetroLink:** Promote and facilitate the development of MetroLink, connecting Swords to the Airport and on to the City Centre.
- **Policy CMP3 – Integrated Land-Use and Transport Approach:** Provide for an integrated approach to land-use and transportation aimed at minimising the demand for travel and prioritising sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport.
- **Policy CMP18 – Public Transport:** Support the provision of a high-quality public transportation system that is accessible to all to serve the needs of the County and to enable a significant shift from car-based travel to public transport.
- **Objective CMO23 – Enabling Public Transport Projects:** Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes to serve needs of the County and the mid-east region in collaboration with the NTA, TII and Irish Rail and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Objective CMO24 – NTA Strategy:** Support NTA and other stakeholders in implementing the NTA Strategy including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART +, LUAS and the GDA Cycle Network.

- **Objective CMO34 - Dublin Airport and MetroLink:** Promote and facilitate the development of MetroLink, connecting Swords to the Airport and on to the City Centre.
- **Objective DMS0229 – Impacts on Archaeological and Architectural Heritage:** Ensure that proposals for large scale developments and infrastructure projects consider the impacts on the archaeological and architectural heritage and seek to avoid them. The extent, scale, density, route, services and signage for such projects should be sited at a distance from Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments, avoid affecting the special character of Architectural Conservation Areas, remain outside the boundaries of historic designed landscapes, and not interrupt specifically designed vistas. Where this is not possible the visual and physical impact must be minimised through appropriate mitigation measures such as high-quality design, that goes beyond regulatory and engineering requirements.
- **Objective IUO45 – Undergrounding of Utility Infrastructure:** Require that the location of local utility services such as electricity, telephone and television cables be located underground wherever possible, and to promote the undergrounding of existing overhead cables and associated equipment, where possible, in the interests of visual amenity and improved public realm.
- **Objective DMS0230 – Undergrounding of Cables:** Seek the placing underground of all electricity, telephone, utility and TV cables in urban areas. It is the intention of the Council to co-operate with other agencies as appropriate, and to use its Development Management powers in the implementation of this policy.
- **Policy HCAP12 – Interventions to Protected Structures:** Ensure that direct or indirect interventions to Protected Structures or adjoining development affecting them are guided by architectural conservation principles so that they are sympathetic, sensitive and appropriate to the special interest, appearance, character, and setting of the Protected Structure and are sensitively scaled and designed.
- **Policy HCA02 – Protection of RMPs/SMRs:** Protect all archaeological sites and monuments, underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects, which are

listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, Wreck Inventory of Ireland and all sites and features of archaeological and historic interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places, and to seek their preservation in situ (or at a minimum, preservation by record) through the planning process.

7.5.9. Dublin Airport Local Area Plan 2020

7.5.10. The proposed cable route runs parallel to the northern boundary of the Airport, along the R108/Naul Road and encroaches into the LAP boundary for short sections, at Cloghran and Dardistown.

7.5.11. The following policies and objectives are relevant to the proposal: -

- **Objective UT01:** Support and facilitate the development and upgrade of strategic information telecommunications technology, electricity network and other required utilities infrastructure.
- **Objective CA04:** Facilitate, where appropriate, sustainable energy development proposals and projects at Dublin Airport.

7.5.12. Kinsaley Local Area Plan 2019

7.5.13. The proposed cable route briefly encroaches into the LAP boundary, around the junction of the R107 and Baskin Lane. The LAP designates a number of land parcels as Development Areas, with the cable route interacting with Areas 2 and 3. The LAP provides a development strategy, including design requirements, for each of the Development Areas.

7.5.14. **Dublin City Council Administrative Area**

7.5.15. Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

7.5.16. The cable route extends into the DCC administrative area for a short distance, at Clonsaugh, where it interacts with the following land use zonings under the Dublin City Development Plan (DCDP): -

- **Z6 Employment/Enterprise:** To provide for the creation and protection of enterprise and facilitate opportunities for employment creation.

- **Z9 Amenity/Open Space Lands/Green Network:** To preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity, open space and ecosystem services.
- **Z14 Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas:** To seek the social, economic and physical development and/or regeneration of an area with mixed-use, of which residential would be the predominant use.

7.5.17. Under each zoning 'public service installation' is a permitted use. Appendix 15, Land Use Definitions, confirms that the term public service installation includes 'all service installations necessary for electricity...'.

7.5.18. The development also extends into a Conservation Area designation, which follows the route of the Santry River in this area.

7.5.19. Other relevant CDP policies and objectives include: -

- **Policy SMT1 – Modal Shift and Compact Growth:** To continue to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as active mobility and public transport, and to work with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other transport agencies in progressing an integrated set of transport objectives to achieve compact growth.
- **Policy SMT3 – Integrated Transport Network:** To support and promote the sustainability principles set out in National and Regional documents to ensure the creation of an integrated transport network that services the needs of communities and businesses of Dublin City and the region.
- **Policy SMT22 – Key Sustainable Transport Projects:** To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city and region and to support the integration of existing public transport infrastructure with other transport modes. In particular the following projects subject to environmental requirements and appropriate planning consents being obtained:
 - DART +
 - Metrolink from Charlemont to Swords

- BusConnects Core Bus Corridor projects
- Delivery of Luas to Finglas
- Progress and delivery of Luas to Poolbeg and Lucan.
- **Policy SMT23 – The Rail Network and Freight Transport:** (i) To work with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail, the NTA, TII and other operators to progress a coordinated approach to improving the rail network, integrated with other public transport modes to ensure maximum public benefit and promoting sustainable transport and improved connectivity. (ii) To facilitate and support the needs of freight transport in accordance with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022 – 2042 and enhance the capacity on existing rail lines and services to provide improved facilities promoting the principles of sustainable transport to cater for the movement of freight by rail. (iii) To support the outcomes of the Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail Rail Freight 2040 Strategy.
- **Policy SI49 – Support for Energy Utilities:** To support the development of enhanced electricity gas supplies, and associated transmission and distribution networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the City, and to facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects and technologies including those to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Plan. In this respect, the City Council will have regard to the 'Guiding Principles' for facilitating the provision of energy networks set out by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019-2031).
- **Policy SI50 – Undergrounding of Energy Utility Infrastructure:** To require that the location of local energy services such as electricity, telephone and television cables be underground wherever possible, and to promote the undergrounding of existing overhead cable and associated equipment, where appropriate, in the interests of visual amenity and facilitating compact urban development.
- **Policy BHA9 – Conservation Areas:** To protect the special interest and character of all Dublin's Conservation Areas – identified under Z8 and Z2 zoning objectives and denoted by red line conservation hatching on the zoning maps. Development within or affecting a Conservation Area must contribute positively to

its character and distinctiveness and take opportunities to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting, wherever possible.

Enhancement opportunities may include:

1. Replacement or improvement of any building, feature or element which detracts from the character of the area or its setting.
2. Re-instatement of missing architectural detail or important features.
3. Improvement of open spaces and the wider public realm and reinstatement of historic routes and characteristic plot patterns.
4. Contemporary architecture of exceptional design quality, which is in harmony with the Conservation Area.
5. The repair and retention of shop and pub fronts of architectural interest.
6. Retention of buildings and features that contribute to the overall character and integrity of the Conservation Area.
7. The return of buildings to residential use.

Changes of use will be acceptable where in compliance with the zoning objectives and where they make a positive contribution to the character, function and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting. The Council will consider the contribution of existing uses to the special interest of an area when assessing change of use applications and will promote compatible uses which ensure future long-term viability.

- **Objective SMT01 – Transition to More Sustainable Travel Modes:** To achieve and monitor a transition to more sustainable travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport over the lifetime of the development plan, in line with the city mode share targets of 26% walking/cycling/micro mobility; 57% public transport (bus/rail/Luas); and 17% private (car/van/HGV/motorcycle).
- **Objective SMT017 – Additional Interchanges and Rail Stations:** (i) To promote and seek the development of a new interchange station at Cross Guns Glasnevin, subject to environmental requirements being satisfied and appropriate planning consents being obtained, as part of the DART+ and Metro link projects. (ii) To promote the provision of a station at Croke Park Stadium. (iii) To promote

and seek provision of additional stations as part of the DART+ projects in consultation with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail.

8.0 Natural Heritage Designations

- 8.1. The table below sets out all the designated sites within 5km of the proposed grid upgrade route:

Site Name	Site Code	Distance (measured to nearest point)
Baldoyle Bay SAC	0199	c. 2.4km east
Malahide Estuary SAC	0205	c. 2.8km north
North Dublin Bay SAC	0206	c. 3km south
Balydoyle Bay SPA	4016	c. 2.4km east
Malahide Estuary SPA	4025	c. 2.8km north
North Bull Island SPA	4006	c. 3km south
North West Irish Sea SPA	4236	c. 3.6km east
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA	4024	c. 4.1km south
Santry Demesne pNHA	0178	c.500m west
Feltrim Hill pNHA	1208	c.1.25km north-east
Sluice River Marsh pNHA	1763	c.1.4km east
Baldoyle Bay pNHA	0199	c.2.3km east
North Dublin Bay pNHA	0206	c.3km south-east
Malahide Estuary pNHA	0205	c.3.5km north-east
Royal Canal pNHA	2103	c.5km south

9.0 Assessment

9.1. Context

- 9.1.1. MetroLink is a high-capacity, high-frequency electrically powered rail line that will run between Swords and Charlemont and with a total of 16 No. stops along the alignment. MetroLink will be powered by a 110kV power supply, that will be provided by the ESB through the new electricity circuits that are the subject of this application. The circuits will allow for electricity connections between existing substations at Belcamp and Newbury and permitted substations at Forrest Little and Ballystruan that form part of the MetroLink development.
- 9.1.2. I consider the main issues to be addressed relate to: -

- Policy context / principle of development;
- Other development plan policies;
- Heritage;
- Requests for financial contributions;
- Other issues raised in submissions; and
- Conditions requested by DCC and FCC.

9.1.3. It should be noted that issues pertaining to Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment are addressed in Sections 9 and 10 of this Report.

9.2. **Policy Context / Principle of Development**

- 9.2.1. MetroLink has substantial planning policy support at each of the National, Regional and Local levels. The NPF describes MetroLink as forming part of critical strategic infrastructure that is essential to Dublin's growth and it is described in the Fingal County Development Plan (FCDP) as crucial to the future development of Swords. It is also described in the Greater Dublin Transport Strategy as a key future growth enabler. The Railway Order for MetroLink was granted by the Commission on 30th September 2025.
- 9.2.2. The proposed cables development represents key enabling infrastructure for the operation of MetroLink and, as such, enjoys similar policy support.
- 9.2.3. Regarding development plan zoning compliance, I have outlined that the cable route interacts with multiple land use zonings under both the FCDP and Dublin City Development Plan (DCDP). Each of the applicable zonings under the DCDP allows for public service installations. The FCDP zonings Dublin Airport, General Employment, High Technology, Residential Area, Residential and Rural Village zonings similarly allow for utility installations. I am satisfied that the proposed development is permitted in principle under each of these zonings.
- 9.2.4. I have also outlined that the Greenbelt and Open Space zonings under the FCDP do not contain any reference to utility installations. They therefore require further consideration.

9.2.5. Section 13.1 of the CDP states that the acceptability of the proposal under these zonings falls to be considered on its individual merits, in terms of its contribution towards the achievement of the zoning objective and vision. However, I note that there is a contradiction between Section 13.1 and a Note that is attached to each of the CDP zoning matrix tables. The Note states as follows: -

‘Uses which are neither ‘Permitted in Principle’ nor ‘Not Permitted’ will be assessed in terms of their contribution towards the achievement of the Zoning Objective and Vision and their compliance and consistency with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan.’ (emphasis added)

9.2.6. For clarity, I have given consideration to the zoning objective and vision for the respective land use zonings and also the compliance and consistency of the proposal with the policies and objectives of the FCDP.

9.2.7. Regarding the Greenbelt zoning, the zoning objective is to ‘Protect and provide for a Greenbelt.’ The vision contains multiple elements, including to demarcate the boundary between rural/urban areas and to check unrestricted sprawl of urban areas, to prevent coalescence of settlements, to prevent countryside encroachment and to protect the setting of towns and/or villages.

9.2.8. Regarding the Open Space zoning, the zoning objective is to ‘Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities.’ The vision provides for ‘recreational and amenity resources for urban and rural populations subject to strict development controls.’ It goes on to state that ‘Only community facilities and other recreational uses will be considered and encouraged by the Planning Authority.’

9.2.9. The proposed cable route, which primarily follows the road network around the perimeter of Dublin Airport, will have a temporary impact on the usability of the cable corridor and working area during construction; however, with respect to the Greenbelt zoning in particular it will not affect the demarcation of boundaries between rural/urban areas and will not contribute to the sprawl of urban areas. Additionally, for the operational phase, the subterranean nature of the cables installation means that there will be no perceptible impact on either the Greenbelt or Open Space zonings.

- 9.2.10. There are a number of development plan objectives that directly support both the MetroLink development and the delivery of infrastructure such as this, as has been outlined above.
- 9.2.11. In view of the absence of any perceptible impact on achievement of either zoning objective following completion of construction and with particular reference to the policy and objective supports provided elsewhere within the FCDP, I consider the proposed development is consistent with the provisions of the FCDP and is thus acceptable in principle under both the Greenbelt and Open Space zonings. I note that Fingal Co. Co. also considers the development to be compliant, stating within its submission that the development would generally comply with policy regarding provision of infrastructural services to appropriately zoned lands in a timely manner.
- 9.2.12. I conclude that the development is acceptable in principle under the applicable land use zonings under both the FCDP and DCDP.

9.3. Other Development Plan Policies

- 9.3.1. The FCC submission identifies interactions between the proposed cable route and a number of development plan map-based policies and objectives. These are discussed below.
- 9.3.2. Both of the Forrest Little-Belcamp option routes encroach into the ecological corridor associated with the Cuckoo Stream, with Option 1 intersecting on the R107/Malahide Road and with Option 2 intersecting on Stockhole Lane. Section 4.6 of the EIAR states that the Option 2 route involves crossing the Cuckoo Stream via HDD, which will eliminate any interaction with the ecological corridor. For the R107/Malahide Road interaction, the crossing is identified on the accompanying drawings as taking place in-road and, in this context, I am satisfied that there will no impact on the corridor. Measures proposed for the protection of surface water quality are discussed elsewhere in my report and I am satisfied that they will be effective in protecting surface water quality at this location during construction.
- 9.3.3. The FCC submission also advises that the cable route encroaches within the 250m catchment area for both Castlemoate House Historic Landfill and Belcamp Lane

Historic Landfill and that the end section of the route runs through Belcamp Lane Historic Landfill.

- 9.3.4. Having considered the FCC submission and having considered available records, I note that both of the above-mentioned sites are not development plan map-based objectives and there is limited information available in relation to either site. Neither site is recorded by the EPA.
- 9.3.5. The Belcamp site is located immediately north of the R139 and east of Stockhole Lane and was the subject of an application for remediation under FCC Ref. F19A/0149. Castlemoate House is located east of the new Dublin Airport north runway and immediately south of the junction of the R132 and Stockhole Lane.
- 9.3.6. In both areas the proposed cable route runs under the public road and in both locations, in view of the limited width and depth of the cable trench, I consider there is limited potential for encountering contaminated land. Adopting a precautionary approach, I recommend the Commission should attach a condition, should it decide to grant permission, requiring the applicant to agree and undertake a programme of ground investigations at both locations prior to commencement of construction.
- 9.3.7. The FCC submission advises that parts of the route are located within designated flood zones. This issue is discussed in Section 10.

9.4. Heritage

- 9.4.1. In the area south of Kinsealy, the route is stated to run through the National Monument constraints buffer for St. Doulagh's Church (Ref. DU015-009001), holy well (Ref. DU015-009004) and St. Catherine's Well (Ref. DU015-009003). The cable route runs underneath the R107/Malahide Road in this area and Chapter 15 of the EIAR states the route does not cross into any monument site but is less than 4m from a monument site. The applicant acknowledges that there is potential for unidentified deposits to have remained in situ underneath the road surface.
- 9.4.2. The applicant proposes to maintain a 5m buffer around a roadside cross at the boundary with Malahide Road and also proposes to undertake a combination of surveys and trial trenching and will appoint a project archaeologist to oversee archaeological works. I note that the Department (DAU) submission supports the

applicant's approach to archaeological investigation and, as is set out elsewhere in my Report, I am satisfied that it will be adequate to ensure that surviving elements of archaeological interest that might be affected by construction will receive adequate consideration. The Department's further submission also requests that a strategy should be prepared, to provide and, as necessary, remediate any damage caused by construction. I consider the request is reasonable.

- 9.4.3. FCC's Conservation Officer identifies that the church grounds are actively used and suggests that consultation should take place with the community, to ensure that proposed mitigation does not impede access to the grounds. I consider this is representative of good construction practice and I see no reason that the Commission should seek to further control the proposed mitigation approach in this area.
- 9.4.4. At Stockhole Lane, east of Cloghran Roundabout and where the cable route approaches the HDD M1 Motorway crossing point, the route turns north of the road and runs through greenfield lands, where it interacts with a Protected Structure Holy Well (RPS No. 608). FCC's Conservation Officer has expressed concern regarding the impact of the development on this Protected Structure, stating that the cable route is too close to the well and needs to be altered, with the vicinity of the well avoided entirely.
- 9.4.5. I note that FCC's recommended conditions contained within their submission does not contain a requirement that the cable route should be altered in this area.
- 9.4.6. The potential impact of construction is addressed at Chapter 15 of the EIAR. Table 15.16 of the EIAR states that the well site lies adjacent to the redline boundary of the proposal and is not directly affected by it, but that enabling works or variation of the cable route have the potential to impact on the well site. Mitigation is proposed, in the form of a 5m buffer around the Protected Structure, together with the erection of protective hoarding, and the applicant also proposes to undertake a condition survey of the well prior to construction, to inform the requirement for any additional mitigation. The applicant did not comment further on the issue in their response to submissions document.

- 9.4.7. As is set out in Section 10 of this Report, I am satisfied that the applicant's mitigation strategy will be effective in protecting the Protected Structure from damage during construction. They propose to undertake a condition survey of the well to determine the requirement for necessary additional mitigation, in consultation with the National Monuments Service. They also propose a 5m buffer around the feature, within which no works will take place, and erection of protective hoardings for the duration of works in its vicinity.
- 9.4.8. FCC's Conservation Officer also commented on potential impacts on historic masonry bridges (the report directly references the crossing of Malahide Road over the Mayne River) and highlights the importance of proposed mitigation protecting these bridges from damage during construction and operation. Additionally, for 18th and 19th Century bridges it is suggested a project conservation engineer may be appropriate to oversee pre-construction surveys, rather than the project archaeologist as proposed by the applicant. Objective HCA048 of the FCDP is referenced, which seeks the retention and repair/maintenance of historic roads and bridges, whether or not they are a protected structure.
- 9.4.9. As is pointed out by the Conservation Officer, the applicant proposes pre-construction condition surveys of bridges identified as CH145 (west of Kinsealy) and CH191 (south of Kinsealy). Having considered the EIAR Appendices, I note that CH191 is the bridge referenced by the Conservation Officer.
- 9.4.10. In terms of the wider requirements of Objective HCAO48, I have considered Table 15.12 of the EIAR, which identifies undesignated cultural heritage sites within the study area and which identifies a number of additional bridges (CH008 and CH201). Both bridges are on the cable route and neither is considered further by the EIAR. In the context of Objective HCAO48, I consider it appropriate that the applicant should also be required to undertake pre-construction condition surveys of CH008 and CH201 and that any damage arising from the development shall be adequately repaired.
- 9.4.11. Regarding the Conservation Officer's suggestion that it may be more appropriate to appoint a conservation engineer for certain surveys, I note that the EIAR mitigation proposes that surveys will be undertaken in consultation with the National Monuments Service. I consider this is appropriate to ensure adequate consideration

is given to these heritage features and I see no reason for additional requirements, of the nature suggested.

- 9.4.12. FCC's Conservation Officer also points out that there is a Protected Structure historic milestone (RPS. No. 462) at the entrance to Lime Hill House, which is not assessed as part of the EIAR, and requests clarification on whether consideration was given to protective measures during construction.
- 9.4.13. The applicant did not respond to the comment in their response to submissions.
- 9.4.14. The historic milestone is enclosed within a wall at the entrance to Lime Hill House and appears to me to be on private property. The cable route runs underneath Malahide Road at this location and the milestone is not directly affected. Notwithstanding, in view of the close proximity of construction to the protected structure, I consider it reasonable that the applicant should be required to incorporate measures to protect it during construction. This can be controlled by condition.
- 9.4.15. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (National Monuments Service) submission on the application, in agreeing with the applicant's findings in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage, seeks attachment of a number of conditions as part of a grant of permission. The applicant confirmed in their response to the submission that they accept the DAU condition request.

9.5. Requests for Financial Contributions

- 9.5.1. Both DCC and FCC have requested the payment of financial contributions.
- 9.5.2. As part of its submission, DCC included requested condition No. 10 which states as follows: -

"Prior to commencement of the development the applicant/developer shall pay to the Planning Authority a financial contribution towards expenditure that was and/or that is proposed to be incurred by the Planning Authority, in respect public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the City Authority, as provided for in the Development Contribution Scheme for Dublin City Council. The phasing of payments shall be agreed with in writing with the planning authority prior of a commencement of construction."

9.5.3. As part of its submission, FCC included requested conditions Nos. 10 and 11, which relate to the payment of financial contributions.

9.5.4. Recommended condition No. 10 states as follows: -

“Prior to commencement of development the developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution towards expenditure that was and/or that is proposed to be incurred by the Planning Authority in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the Authority, as provided for in the Contribution Scheme for Fingal County made by the Council. The phasing of payments shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.”

9.5.5. Recommended condition No. 11 states as follows: -

“A community gain fund shall be established to support an education and awareness programme in respect of renewable energy and energy conservation which would be of benefit to the community in the general catchment area. Details of the management and operation of the community gain fund, which shall be lodged in a special community fund account, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. In default of agreement, the details shall be determined by An Bord Pleanála.”

9.5.6. Regarding the request under the DCC and FCC S48 schemes, the stated purpose of both schemes is to levy contributions in respect of public infrastructure development, including infrastructure to facilitate public transport. The proposed development comprises infrastructure that will facilitate a substantial public infrastructure development and which will benefit the area of the planning authority. I consider it would be inappropriate to require the applicant to pay a financial contribution under either S48 scheme.

9.5.7. Regarding FCC’s requested condition No. 11, the request is stated to be grounded in Section 182B(6) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. In justifying the request, FCC state that there would be a synergy between the overall MetroLink proposal and the current approach towards sustainable energy provision and usage.

9.5.8. I note that FCC made a similar request in its initial submission on the MetroLink Railway Order application (ABP-314724-22). I also note that as part of the MetroLink Railway Order consent, Transport Infrastructure Ireland entered into an agreement with FCC in relation to a number of matters, including item No. 3 which states as follows: -

“TII commits, as part of its procurement processes, to ensure that its duly appointed contractors will be required to work productively with all established Community Groups, through the local community liaison offices along the route, to identify projects at a local level that would involve the Community in the delivery of MetroLink and its legacy. Such projects could include: A local school learning programme, enhancement of community amenity within agreed funding limits and engagement with final landscape and finishing options. TIIs contractors will also be appropriately incentivised to create opportunities to engage with such Community Groups.”

9.5.9. Whilst I acknowledge FCC’s desire to raise awareness and understanding of renewable energy and energy conservation, the proposed development forms part of a substantial public transport infrastructure project that I consider is itself a substantial planning gain. TII has also agreed to meaningful engagement with community groups. I do not consider it necessary for the Commission to attach conditions requiring the setting up of community funds or other elements of community gain as part of the proposed development.

9.6. **Other Issues**

9.6.1. Other issues raised in the submissions relate to: -

- Safe aviation operations – Dublin Airport Authority submission
- Water quality – Inland Fisheries Ireland submission
- Impact on St. Doulagh’s Oaks, Malahide Road – Respond submission
- Impact on future development options at Horizon Logistics Park – HPREF Dublin Office DevCo submission
- Impact on 19 Turnapin Cottages - Patrick Murphy submission

- PFAS contamination at Dublin Airport

9.6.2. Aviation Operations at Dublin Airport

9.6.3. The Dublin Aviation Authority (DAA) submission on the application states that there is a risk to safe aviation operations at Dublin Airport and requests a condition requiring the developer to engage with both the DAA and AirNav Ireland in order to satisfy safeguarding requirements. The applicant confirmed in their response to the submission that they are willing to accept the requested condition.

9.6.4. Water Quality

9.6.5. The Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) submission highlights the proximity of a number of excavation sites to surface waters and further identifies that there is the potential for contaminants and pollutants to be discharged to waters and conveyed further downstream, unless appropriate safeguards are put in place. In this respect the submission recommends that works should be undertaken with IFI guidance document 'Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' (2016). The submission also provides detailed commentary regarding requirements for water crossings and identifies that IFI consent is required for same.

9.6.6. The issue of potential impacts on surface water quality is addressed in detail in Section 10. The applicant acknowledges that construction has the potential to impact on receiving surface water quality and proposes a suite of mitigation measures to address the issue, including adherence to advice contained within the 2016 IFI guidance, provision of a 15m buffer zone between storage zones and working areas, usage of silt traps/fences and control of vehicle movements in the vicinity of open water in order to minimise potential ground rutting. They also undertake that water crossing methods will be agreed with IFI.

9.6.7. These measures, which are consistent with measures contained within the IFI submission, are established practice for working near open water and I am satisfied that they will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of water quality within receiving waters during construction.

9.6.8. Impact on St. Doulagh's Oaks, Malahide Road

- 9.6.9. The Respond submission on the application draws attention to the landscaped area to the front of the St. Doulagh's Oaks development on Malahide Road, which contains mature trees. The submission seeks assurances that construction will not have a direct impact on trees and that the foul and storm water drainage and watermain connection on Malahide Road will be protected.
- 9.6.10. The applicant commits to engage with Respond during the detailed design and construction phases, to address identified issues.
- 9.6.11. The cable route runs under Malahide Road in the area of St. Doulagh's Oaks. Chapter 16 of the EIAR, Material Assets, states that the route will be diverted around underground utilities, dependent on complexity, and that in some cases the utility may need to be relocated. In such circumstances, the works will be coordinated with the utility provider and a work methodology will be agreed with an aim to avoid loss of service. Interaction with underground utilities in urban areas is commonplace and am satisfied that the applicant's approach will be sufficient to protect the observer from undue impact during construction.
- 9.6.12. Regarding mature trees to the front of St. Doulagh's Oaks, they are elevated above the level of Malahide Road. In view of the fact that the cable route runs under the road in this area, I am satisfied that there is unlikely to be any impact on them during construction.
- 9.6.13. Future development options at Horizon Logistics Park
- 9.6.14. HPREF Dublin Office DevCo's submission on the application states that the cable route alignment (the Forrest Little – Ballystruan circuit) will prejudice the development potential of lands at Horizon Logistics Park (HLP) and it is requested that the alignment should be amended. The observer suggests a parcel further north of the proposed route, which has been reserved for a future road project.
- 9.6.15. In responding to the submission, the applicant points out that the proposed route was chosen because of constraints presented by the suggested alternative route, in particular an earthen berm and a local stream. The response also states that alternative routes through HLP were deemed less favourable due to traffic disruption, the location of existing services and the busy Harristown bud depot to the east.

- 9.6.16. Firstly, I would highlight to the Commission that the option suggested by HPREF Dublin Office DevCo is not available to the Commission for consideration as the application boundary is contained tightly around the applicant's proposed route.
- 9.6.17. In terms of potential impacts on HLP buildings, I note the applicant's responding comments regarding constraints. I also note that there is a development plan roads objective to the immediate north of HLP that has been in place since the Fingal County Development Plan 2011-2017 and runs directly to the rear of the buildings at HLP. This objective appears to me to restrict any ability to extend these buildings to the north.
- 9.6.18. Taking a balanced view, I consider the proposed alignment through HLP is acceptable.
- 9.6.19. Impact on 19 Turnapin Cottages
- 9.6.20. Patrick Murphy seeks assurances that no high voltage underground cables will encroach onto his property boundary, that there will be no requirement for a wayleave for the purposes of construction, repair or maintenance and that the cables will not impact on future development options.
- 9.6.21. In responding to the submission, the applicant points out that in the area of the observer's property the development will utilise a spare ducting circuit that was provided as part of a previously installed property, the Dardistown-Kilemore 110kV project. As such, it is not proposed to utilise additional lands at this location.
- 9.6.22. I am satisfied that the development will not unduly impact on or further restrict development options at Mr. Murphy's property.
- 9.6.23. PFAS Contamination at Dublin Airport
- 9.6.24. The issue of PFAS contamination at Dublin Airport appears to have been unknown at the time of the application and the issue is not addressed within the original application documents. The issue was first raised at the MetroLink Oral Hearing, following which the applicant for that application (Transport Infrastructure Ireland) acknowledged a contamination issue at Dublin Airport and proposed a management strategy within a document entitled 'PFAS Management Strategy for Dublin Airport'.

- 9.6.25. In this context, the current applicant was requested to submit further information that addresses the potential for encountering PFAS compounds in surface waters, groundwater and soils at Dublin Airport. Responding submissions were received on 27th February 2026 and 7th April 2026 that contain proposals for the management of PFAS contamination encountered.
- 9.6.26. I would bring to the Commission's attention that the applicant initially proposed (in the 27th February 2026 submission) to treat PFAS-contaminated material in accordance with the 'PFAS Management Strategy for Dublin Airport', which itself involved the construction of a dedicated TMMC at Dardistown, however; following clarification of the issue, the applicant proposed that segregated storage areas will be provided within the application site boundary and that affected soils will either be triaged and stored within the construction site or will be transported to the TMMC for triage and management there. The Commission will note that the TMMC is not within the application site and has therefore been given little weight in my assessment.
- 9.6.27. The presence of PFAS is identified within surrounding surface waters and in groundwaters and soils near the north apron of the Airport. The risk of encountering these substances in excavated soils is considered to be low, where construction does not encroach into the Airport, and interaction with substances in surface waters will not arise due to the avoidance of in-stream works and the use of other crossing methods such as the use of existing ducts or trenchless crossings.
- 9.6.28. The potential for encountering PFAS in groundwater is acknowledged, primarily at HDD launch sites where a greater depth of excavation is required. Having considered the proposed mitigation strategy, I consider it is sufficient to ensure there is no risk of a contamination incident during construction.

9.7. Conditions Requested by Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council

- 9.7.1. Both of the local authority submissions contain a list of recommended conditions. The FCC submission contains a list of 11 No. recommended conditions and the DCC submission contains a list of 10 No. recommended conditions. The table below summarises the recommended conditions, the applicant's response to same where provided, and my commentary on the appropriateness of each recommended condition.

DCC Conditions

Condition No.	Summary of condition	Applicant response	Comment on appropriateness
1.	Archaeological controls and supervision		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
2.	a) Tree protection measures b) Wildlife protection during construction c) Implementation of EIAR/NIS mitigation measures		a) & c) The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders. b) The EIAR commits to pre-construction confirmatory surveys for multiple species, including bats and badgers.
3.	a) Adherence to DCC Construction and Demolition Good Practice Guide for Construction Sites. b) Submission of CEMP for approval. c) Noise limit controls.		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
4.	a) – d) Surface water quality / water infrastructure controls		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
5.	a) – b) Requirement to agree construction programme and methods with DCC Environment & Transportation Department		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
6.	a) – f) Preparation of a CEMP in agreement with DCC		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
7.	Preparation of a Construction Waste Management Plan in agreement with DCC		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.

8.	Development to accord with relevant DCC Codes of Practice.		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
9.	Development to keep streets clean or to undertake street cleaning.		The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
10.	Request for financial contribution under s48 scheme.		This request is discussed elsewhere in my report.

FCC Conditions

Condition No.	Summary of condition	Applicant response	Comment on appropriateness
1.	Development shall be carried out in accordance with application documents	No objection to recommended condition.	This is a standard condition, attached to Commission Orders.
2.	a) Details of construction traffic management plan to be agreed prior to commencement. b) Details of the crossing of the proposed east-west distributor road to be agreed prior to commencement. c) Necessary FCC/TII consents to be in place prior to commencement. d) Details of the M1 crossing to be agreed with FCC/TII prior to commencement e) Damage to the national road arising from works shall be rectified.	No objection to recommended condition.	a) and e) The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders. b) and d) I consider the requested condition is reasonable & necessary, in order to protect the local and national road network during construction.

3.	A construction and demolition resource water management plan shall be prepared prior to commencement.	No objection to recommended condition.	The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
4.	Construction phase: a) Construction works to be carried out: 8am-7pm Monday-Friday and 8am-1pm Saturday. No working on Sundays or bank holidays. b) Noise abatement measures shall comply with recommendations of B.S.5228:2009+A1:2014. c) A construction management plan shall outline mitigation to ensure emissions such as noise/dust are adequately controlled. d) Construction shall be managed to ensure air emissions and/or odours do not impair amenities or the environment. Use of diesel generators shall not be permitted. Operational phase: e) Noise shall not cause annoyance to any noise sensitive location in the vicinity. f) Cumulative noise emissions shall not exceed background noise by more than 5dB(A). g) Development shall be managed to ensure air emissions/odours do not impair amenities or the environment. h)	Condition 4a) is inappropriate and should be omitted. It is likely that nighttime working will be required. Conditions 4b), c) and d) will be addressed in the project CEMP. Conditions 4e), f) and g) are unreasonable and not applicable. The impact of the cables in terms of noise and emissions to air will be minimal.	4a): I accept the applicant's point, that works will likely require nighttime working. In view of the requirement to attain road opening licences in order to undertake the proposed works within the public road, I agree that it would be inappropriate to attach the FCC recommended condition. 4b), c) and d): The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders. Conditions 4e), f) and g): I consider the recommended conditions are unnecessary. The proposed cables development will have minimal noise and emissions impacts during operation.
5.	Necessary measures to be taken to prevent spillage/deposit of materials on roads. Any such spillage shall be removed. Applicant will be responsible for repair of damage to roads by	No objection to recommended condition.	The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.

	making good any damage or paying the cost of repair to FCC.		
6.	a) No surface water/rainwater shall discharge to the foul water system b) b) Surface water drainage arrangements to comply with Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works.	No objection to recommended condition.	The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders.
7.	Proposals to connect to the water/wastewater network shall include a connection agreement prior to commencement.	Condition is unnecessary. Connections are not anticipated.	I agree that the condition is unnecessary, given the nature of the proposed development.
8.	a) Submitted landscape plans shall be implemented in full b) Planting shall be carried out in first planting season following completion of development. Developer will be responsible for maintenance / replacement until planting is established. c) A landscape architect shall supervise implementation of landscaping plans.	No objection to recommended condition. Timing of part b) is impractical, given the prolonged construction period.	The recommended condition is similar to a standard condition attached to Commission Orders. I accept the applicant's point, that condition 8b) is impractical in view of the prolonged nature of the construction phase.
9.	Vegetation clearance shall be carried out between 1 st September-end of February.	No objection to recommended condition.	There is a legal restriction on clearance of vegetation during the nesting season and I see no reason that the Commission should duplicate this legal protection.
10.	Request for financial contribution under s48 scheme.	Condition should not be attached. FCC stated in its report that the project would be exempt for contributions.	This request is discussed elsewhere in my report.

11.	Request for community gain fund	Condition is unnecessary. ESB operates campaigns nationally and locally to promote renewable energy and energy conservation.	This request is discussed elsewhere in my report.
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10.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

10.1. The Environmental Impact Assessment Directive requires that projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment must be suitably assessed prior to any consent decision being made. The proposed development is not of a type contained in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2005, however; it is functionally linked to the MetroLink project (ABP-314724-22) that was itself supported by an EIAR. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), prepared by Mott MacDonald consultants, Section 1.4 of which states that as the proposed development and MetroLink are reliant and interdependent on each other, an EIAR has been prepared which includes an assessment of intra-project elements.

10.2. This section of my report comprises an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed development and should be read in conjunction with the planning and appropriate assessment sections of my report. This EIA is also based on my site inspection of 10th December 2025, and the other documentation on file including the planning authority reports, planning history, and third-party submissions and observations.

10.3. EIA Format

10.3.1. The EIAR comprises 3 No. volumes. Volume 1 is a Non-Technical Summary that provides a summary of the EIAR in non-technical language. Volume 2 comprises the main body of the EIAR and Volume 3 contains a series of technical appendices that are of relevance to individual chapters.

10.3.2. The EIAR includes:

- A description of the project comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project;
- A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;
- A description of the features of the project and/or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;

- A description of the reasonable alternatives which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the project on the environment; and
- A non-technical summary of the information referred to above.

10.3.3. As is required under Article 3(1) of Directive 2014/52/EU, the EIAR describes and assesses the direct and indirect significant effects of the project on the following factors: (a) population and human health; (b) biodiversity with particular attention to the species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC; (c) land, soil, water, air and climate; (d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape. It also considers interactions between factors.

10.3.4. Having considered the contents of the EIAR, I am satisfied that it has been prepared by competent experts to ensure its completeness and quality, and that the information contained therein is up to date, adequately identifies and describes the direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment and complies with the requirements of European and Irish legislation relating to EIA.

10.4. **Alternatives**

10.4.1. Chapter 4 of the EIAR relates to alternatives and includes consideration of a Do Nothing scenario (which it is pointed out is not possible as a power supply to MetroLink is required).

10.4.2. The consideration of alternatives principally relates to routeing between the substation sites and is stated to have been guided by a series of principles related to: -

- Routeing within the public domain where possible,
- Avoidance of crossings of major roads, railway and waterways where possible,
- Minimisation of traffic disruption where possible,
- Minimisation of sudden horizontal and vertical changes in the alignment, and
- The availability of suitable locations for joint chambers.

- 10.4.3. Section 4.5 outlines that the route options were evaluated against criteria that included factors such as wayleave/easement requirements, number of water crossings, the presence of other underground elements within the road reserve, potential impacts on contaminated land, impacts on cultural heritage sites, etc (the results of this evaluation are contained in Appendix K of the EIAR).
- 10.4.4. Having considered the information provided, I consider the applicant's primary approach, of seeking to route within the public domain while avoiding known obstructions/barriers and avoiding congested roads, is reasonable and has been appropriately justified. Consideration will be given to the proposed routes in the following sections.
- 10.4.5. Conclusion on Alternatives
- 10.4.6. I am satisfied that the applicant has given adequate consideration to the issue of alternatives, including the use of multi-criteria analysis, to identify the preferred option now before the Commission. I consider the applicant has adequately described and documented the reasonable alternatives that they considered and has given a reasonable indication of the main reasons for the options chosen, with reference to environmental effects.

10.5. Major Accidents and Disasters

- 10.5.1. The assessment of the vulnerability of the proposed development to Major Accidents and Disasters is addressed at Chapter 18 of the EIAR. The assessment considers the project's vulnerability to flooding, fire, the creation of electromagnetic fields, electricity failure, exposure to high voltage, ground collapse/subsidence/landslide, major road accident, industrial accidents, earthquakes, biological hazard, malicious attack/cyber attack and a pollution event.
- 10.5.2. Vulnerability to major accidents and/or disasters is considered to be unlikely. In respect of a road traffic accident, the risk of an accident giving rise to death or injury to a member of the public is identified, however; controls forming part of the traffic management plan together with construction planning and appropriate method statements are considered adequate to ensure there is no risk of a major accident or disaster.

10.5.3. Whilst it is unstated within the EIAR, having consulted the Health and Safety Authority's website I note that there are no Seveso sites within 1km and the proposed development site does not encroach into the consultation zone of any such site.

10.5.4. I am satisfied that, given the nature of the proposed development and the mitigation measures proposed, significant effects on the environment are unlikely.

10.6. Population and Human Health

10.6.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.6.2. Potential significant impacts on Population and Human Health are addressed at Chapter 7 of the EIAR, which addresses potential significant impacts through an assessment of the following environmental factors: demographics, land use, economic activity, tourism and recreation, community and amenities and human health.

10.6.3. The assessment is stated to have been prepared in accordance with relevant guidance and policy and is based on a study area of 500m (250m either side of cable route). The assessment undertaken was desk-based and included the collation of data from specified sources.

10.6.4. Receiving Environment

10.6.5. Section 7.3 describes the receiving environment as it relates to population centres; demographic/economic profile; housing; land use; road users; tourism, recreation and amenities; and human health. Of particular note, it outlines that 19.5km of the route is located in County Fingal and with 4.5km of the route located in Dublin City. Notable interactions with Dublin Airport, business/industrial/commercial uses and a golf course are outlined.

10.6.6. Summary of Impact Assessment

10.6.7. Table 1 below summarises the population & human health impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Population and Human Health Impacts	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Population Centres	Temporary disruption to the local population, giving rise to a temporary slight adverse impact	• Work will be undertaken in accordance with applicable legislation and best practice guidance • A CEMP will be implemented by the contractor, to safeguard the environment, personnel and nearby sensitive receptors • The contractor will be required to maintain close liaison with stakeholders throughout construction • A traffic management plan will be implemented, agreed with Fingal Co. Co. and Dubin City Council • Mitigation measures to deal with noise and vibration, air, climate, water, landscape, roads and traffic are contained in the relevant EIAR chapter.	Not significant
Demographic/Economic Profile	The local economy is predicted to experience a slight positive impact from increased spending on goods and services.		
Housing and Land Use	Temporary changes in land use (required at GAA pitches, greenfield lands, Dublin Airport lands, car parks and lands and lands adjacent to the M1 and M50 are predicted to give rise to a temporary slight adverse impact		
Roads and Traffic	Disruption to road users is acknowledged, the adverse impact is predicted to be not significant		
Tourism, Recreation and Amenities	Disruption to access and general disturbance are predicted to give rise to a temporary slight adverse impact		
Health and Wellbeing	The potential for nuisance impacts (noise and dust) is acknowledged, with the impact predicted to be slight adverse		
Operation and Maintenance			
Population Centres	Maintenance works will have an imperceptible impact	• No mitigation measures proposed.	No significant residual impact predicted.
Demographic/Economic Profile	No impact identified.		

Housing and Land Use	No impact identified.		
Tourism, Recreation and Amenities	No impact identified.		
Health and Wellbeing	The operational impact on human health is predicted to be imperceptible.		
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development			
Cumulative Impacts			
No significant cumulative impacts are predicted in relation to Population and Human Health, during construction or operation. The assessment acknowledges the need for coordination in the event of overlap with the construction of other projects.			

10.6.8. Submissions received

10.6.9. The submissions by HPREF Dublin Office DevCo 1 Limited and Patrick Murphy raise concerns that the proposal will affect the development potential of the observers' lands.

10.6.10. Assessment

10.6.11. The EIAR assessment predicts a number of short-term impacts, that are predicted to range between not significant and slight, in terms of significance. In view of the nature and scale of the proposal, I agree that impacts arising will be short-term and there will be no significant impact on Population and Human Health.

10.6.12. Notwithstanding this I note that the applicant has proposed a number of mitigation measures, primarily in the form of preparation and implementation of a CEMP and traffic management plan, to control the construction phase and reference is also made to other mitigation proposals that are proposed in the context of noise and vibration, air, climate, water, landscape, roads and traffic impacts, that are intended to mitigate the potential impacts of the development. I am satisfied that these measures, which are representative of good construction practice for projects of this nature, will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development on population and human health.

10.6.13. I agree that in view of the nature of the project, the operational phase impact will be imperceptible.

10.6.14. Cumulative Impacts

10.6.15. In respect of MetroLink, slight cumulative impacts are predicted as construction is expected to coincide in part.

10.6.16. The MetroLink and proposed cables projects briefly intersect to the north and south of Dublin Airport, in areas that are sparsely populated. The area already experiences high noise levels, associated with airport operations. I consider there is the potential for cumulative impacts in respect of traffic disruption and I agree with the EIAR assessment that the impact is likely to be slight, in view of the short-term nature of the interaction. I further consider the mitigation proposals will be effective in minimising the potential for cumulative disruptive impacts.

10.6.17. For other projects, the EIAR identifies the likelihood of the proposed development being constructed at the same time as other developments in the area. The assessment highlights the need to implement appropriate mitigation, including the scheduling of works and regular liaison meetings, in order to minimise impacts. The applicant commits to engagement with project proponents prior to commencement of construction, in order to minimise potential cumulative impacts.

10.6.18. The proposed development, whilst having a long linear length, has a small construction footprint and I consider the proposed CEMP and traffic management plan will be effective in minimising the potential for cumulative disruptive impacts. As is discussed in other sections of my report, additional mitigation proposals in respect of noise and vibration, air, climate, water, landscape, roads and traffic impacts will be effective in minimising the potential for cumulative impacts in these areas.

10.6.19. Conclusion

10.6.20. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts on Population and Human Health during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.7. Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate - Land, Soils and Hydrogeology

10.7.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.7.2. Potential significant impacts on Land, Soils and Hydrogeology are addressed at Chapter 8 of the EIAR. It is stated to have been prepared in accordance with relevant guidance and is based on a desktop assessment that focusses on a 500m corridor either side of the proposed development (with consideration stated to have been given to sensitive features such as springs and boreholes up to 1km from the route that might be impacted by dewatering). Adopting a conservative approach, the assessment assumes that trenches will be required along the entire route.

10.7.3. The assessment is also stated to include a high-level assessment of compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

- 10.7.4. Having read the chapter, I note that predicted impacts are not presented on a 'without' and 'with' basis, with the predicted impact outlined on the basis of the proposed mitigation.
- 10.7.5. Receiving Environment
- 10.7.6. The route alignment is stated to be indicative of a largely suburban environment, with the majority of land use types being man-made. Of particular note, there is a historical waste facility approx. 100m east of the Forrest Little – Ballystruan route and there are 3 No. licensed and 1 No. surrendered Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) sites within 500m of the scheme, that impact all route sections. The land use baseline is summarised in Table 8-5.
- 10.7.7. The route is said to be underlain by well drained, fertile soils, which are sensitive, and urban soils that are considered potentially significantly contaminated and that has high sensitivity. There are no county geological sites within 500m of the development.
- 10.7.8. All Water Framework Directive (WFD) groundwater bodies are stated to be identified as drinking water protected areas, due to the potential for qualifying abstractions of water for human consumption. There is no groundwater source protection area within the study area and public supply or group scheme source protection areas within 10km.
- 10.7.9. Summary of Impact Assessment
- 10.7.10. Table 2 below summarises the Land, Soils & Hydrogeology assessment presented in the EIAR.

Land, Soils & Hydrogeology	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Land Use	Loss of arable land (inc. loss of crops)	Trenching will take place in small sections & will be restored to a similar condition following completion	Slight adverse
Soils & Geology	Loss of soils & bedrock	Excavated material will be used as backfill, with excess material transported for disposal	Slight adverse
	Excavation of contaminated soils	Contaminated soil will be disposed of to a licensed facility	Imperceptible
	Impacts on soil quality from dewatering	Dewatering discharge will be pumped through silt socks to a percolation area if the soil is not saturated, otherwise a settlement tank will be used to remove solids prior to discharge.	Imperceptible
Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology	Contamination of soils & groundwater from storage of excavated material or contaminant spillages	Excavated material will be stored in a bunded area, at least 15m from a watercourse. Silt fencing will also be installed around bunds. Refuelling will not take place in the vicinity of exposed excavations, karst receptors or watercourses. Spill kits will be available. Contaminated materials will be disposed of in a licensed facility	Imperceptible
	Change to recharge potential due to soil compaction	Machinery usage will be managed & matting will be used in soft ground & protected areas	Imperceptible
Hydrogeology	Exposure of karst features during construction may provide a hydrological connection to groundwater or may lead to collapse	Karst features encountered may be filled with permeable material and overlain with an impermeable membrane for protection.	Imperceptible

	Plant movements in these areas will be limited	
Dewatering may temporarily affect groundwater flows and levels in local sections and may affect groundwater abstractions	No mitigation proposed as groundwater levels are expected to recover quickly. In the unlikely event that groundwater was significantly impacted during construction, measures, such as tankered supply, would be taken to maintain supplies.	Slight/imperceptible
Dewatering of trenches may affect springs and wells at specified locations	No mitigation possible but groundwater levels are expected to recover quickly	Temporary moderate adverse
Spillages of contaminants in trenches may lead to contamination of an aquifer	Trenching will take place in short sections and excavations will be inspected daily. Refuelling will not take place within the vicinity of exposed excavations, karst receptors or watercourses. Spill kits will be available. Contaminated materials will be disposed of in a licensed facility.	Imperceptible
Trenches or ducts provide preferential pathway for groundwater	Industry best practice for trench backfill, including the use of clay barriers at regular intervals, will be adopted. Sections of ducting will be sealed both ends in preparation for subsequent cable installation.	Imperceptible
HDD impacts on aquifer characteristics	Industry best practice will ensure minimal disturbance to the surrounding aquifer, where HDD is deployed	Imperceptible
For the Forrest Little – Ballystruan section, trench dewatering may mobilise leachate/hazardous material from known contaminated sites	Excavations will be inspected daily. Contaminated water will be treated on or off site	Imperceptible

		The following additional mitigation is proposed: • A CEMP will be implemented, that will specify measures in relation to the protection of land, soils, geology and hydrogeology • Pre-construction surveys of wells, springs and groundwater abstractions will be undertaken. • Water quality and water level testing will be undertaken pre, during and post-construction for identified drinking water abstraction sources	
Operation and Maintenance			
Land Use	Loss of arable land	Avoidance of third party lands for agricultural use is preferred, due to potential interference from root systems or digging.	Permanent slight adverse
Soils	Risk of ground gas in joint bays	Risk will be mitigated by adequate venting and use of PPE during maintenance	Imperceptible
Soils & Geology	No predicted impacts		
Hydrogeology	Subsurface structures act as a barrier to groundwater flow	No mitigation required – proposed structures are unlikely to impede groundwater flow	Imperceptible
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative impacts associated with MetroLink and developments Dublin Airport and at Belcamp substation, where slight adverse impacts are predicted arising from loss of soil & bedrock.			

- 10.7.11. Table 8-13 presents a WFD groundwater Screening Assessment. It concludes that, with the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed, the proposed development will not result in a change in status of any WFD groundwater body quantitative or chemical elements or prevent any groundwater bodies from reaching good status in the future
- 10.7.12. Assessment
- 10.7.13. The development requires the excavation and removal of soils and this gives rise to potential impacts in respect of the permanent loss of some soils, dewatering of excavations and related mobilisation of contaminants already present in soils and discharge of contaminants into exposed excavations. The receiving environment is characterised by primarily man-made uses, interspersed with parcels of undeveloped/agricultural land and with baseline sensitivities ranging between low-medium. Having considered the assessment presented in Chapter 8, I agree that the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact in terms of land, soils and hydrogeology.
- 10.7.14. Dewatering of trenches and joint bays during construction is identified as having a potential temporary moderate impact in respect of groundwater flows and levels local to the works section. In particular the assessment identifies that St. Doolagh's Well and St. Catherine's Pond (within 40m of the Forrest Little to Belcamp Option 1 route) may be temporarily impacted by dewatering.
- 10.7.15. I accept that there is no mitigation available in respect of impact on groundwater flows/levels during required dewatering, should this be necessary. In view of the smallscale nature of the excavation and limited length of construction in proximity to this well, I am of the opinion that any impact of the project on water levels will not be significant and I agree that water levels are likely to recover quickly following the completion of construction. There will therefore be no permanent impact on this well.
- 10.7.16. In respect of the potential for encountering contaminated land, the EIAR identifies the presence of a former waste facility east of the Forrest Little – Ballystruan route. This facility isn't identified on the associated drawings, but having reviewed available EPA mapping for the area it appears to relate to the St.

Margaret's Recycling facility, which is accessed from the R122 and is east of the cable route. The EIAR also identifies that there are 3 No. Integrated Pollution Control sites within 500m of the route.

10.7.17. I note that the application is not supported by the results of ground investigation surveys and, thus, the applicant's prediction is based on the theoretical possibility of encountering contaminated land at these locations.

10.7.18. Trench excavation will give rise to temporary displacement of soils and may result in interaction with contaminated soils and interaction with groundwaters. The extent of excavation is small, with construction undertaken in small sections. Excavated soils will be stored and used as backfill where possible and with contaminated soils disposed of under licence. Whilst there is no specific commitment to segregate contaminated soils prior to disposal, I nevertheless am of the opinion that this is a construction detail matter that is ordinarily identified as part of the project CEMP and in this instance the applicant has proposed to prepare a CEMP and expressly provides that it will include soil management measures.

10.7.19. As has been outlined elsewhere in my report, the issue of PFAS contamination at Dublin Airport appears to have been unknown at the time of the application and the issue is not addressed within the EIAR. At the Further Information stage, the applicant provided a Technical Memorandum entitled PFAS Strategy for HV cables that identifies potential for encountering PFAS in groundwater within HDD launch sites and proposes a strategy for containing and dealing with such materials. This includes segregated storage of contaminated arisings.

10.7.20. I agree with the applicant, that the risk of encountering PFAS in the area of the Airport relates to areas of deeper excavation, i.e. the HDD launch sites. The applicant proposes to undertake location-specific PFAS testing of soils and groundwater and drilling spoils and muds generated by HDD works will be contained, sampled and disposed of appropriately. There is also a commitment to analyse all spoils for PFAS and other contaminants prior to disposal at a licensed facility. I am satisfied that the proposed mitigation will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact during construction.

10.7.21. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.

10.7.22. Water Framework Directive

10.7.23. The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) requires all Member States to protect and improve water quality in all waters so that 'Good' water quality status is achieved by 2027. Ireland is implementing the WFD through River Basin Management Plans and since lodgement of the application, the 'Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland' (WAP) has been published.

10.7.24. As is stated within the EIAR, the cable route lies within the Swords, Dublin and Industrial Facility groundwater bodies. The WFD water quality status and risk category for each waterbody is unstated within the EIAR, but I note that, according to EPA records, each of the 3 groundwater bodies currently has 'good' overall status. The Swords groundwater body is 'not at risk' of not meeting its WFD good status objective, whilst the Industrial Facility groundwater body is 'at risk'. The risk category for the Dublin groundwater body is 'under review'.

10.7.25. Section 8.8 of the EIAR contains a WFD groundwater screening assessment and as I have outlined, it concludes that, with the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed, the proposed development will not result in a change in status of any WFD groundwater body.

10.7.26. I have addressed issues relating to potential impacts on groundwater levels/flows and the spread of contaminants during construction in previous paragraphs, concluding that there will be no significant impact arising from the development subject to the implementation of proposed mitigation. I am satisfied that the development will not impede attainment of the WFD 'good' status objective for any of the above-mentioned groundwater bodies.

10.7.27. Cumulative Impacts

10.7.28. In respect of MetroLink, slight cumulative adverse impacts are predicted in respect of the loss of soils and bedrock.

10.7.29. For other projects, The EIAR addresses the potential for cumulative impacts with development at Dublin Airport and development at Belcamp 220kV substation and similarly predicts a slight adverse impact in respect of loss of soils and bedrock.

10.7.30. I note that the EIAR in respect of MetroLink predicted negligible impacts on soils in the vicinity of both Dublin Airport and Dardistown, where there are minor

interactions with the proposed cables route. The proposed development is likely to result in reuse of a substantial proportion of the excavated material, as part of reinstatement, and I am of the opinion that the cumulative impact on soils will be at worst slight.

10.7.31. Conclusion

10.7.32. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts on Land, Soils and Hydrogeology during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.8. Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate - Surface Water and Flooding

10.8.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.8.2. Potential significant impacts relating to Surface Water and Flooding are addressed at Chapter 9 of the EIAR, which considers surface water drainage, water supply and wastewater discharge, WFD surface water objectives and Flood risk.

10.8.3. The chapter is stated to have been undertaken in accordance with relevant guidance and comprised a desktop assessment.

10.8.4. According to the assessment, the precise method of watercourse crossings will be determined following site investigations and in agreement with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). The EIAR assesses in-road crossings, open cut crossings and HDD crossings of watercourses.

10.8.5. Receiving Environment

10.8.6. The cable route follows road networks and adjacent lands from substation to substation. It does not encroach into any European site, but there are downstream linkages to Baldoyle Bay SAC/SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Malahide Estuary SAC and Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA from the various cable route alignments.

10.8.7. The cable route is located within the Liffey and Dublin Bay and Nanny-Devlin WFD catchments and the route crosses a number of specified rivers and streams. Each of the Mayne River, Cuckoo Stream, Santry River and Sluice River has 'poor' WFD

status and the Barberstown Stream and Dunbro Stream have 'moderate' WFD status.

10.8.8. The Broadmeadow Estuary (Inner) Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive Sensitive Area is located approximately 9km downstream from the Dunbro and Barberstown Streams.

10.8.9. There are no downstream drinking water abstraction points or salmonoid designated rivers within or linked to the proposed development.

10.8.10. The cable route avoids Flood Zones A and B where possible and the cable is designed to be floodable without affecting its operation. Joint bays are designed to be watertight, but link boxes are vulnerable to flooding and locations have been chosen to avoid Flood Zones A and B and high potential risk from surface water. Figure 9.1 presents a visual representation of the vulnerability of the cable route to flooding, identifying some sections as falling within a flood zone. The development is considered to pass the development management justification test.

10.8.11. Potential Impacts

10.8.12. Table 3 below summarises the Surface Water and Flooding impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Surface Water & Flooding	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Surface water quality	<u>Open Cut Crossing</u> Excavation works, material storage, clearance, watercourse crossings and infilling of trenches pose a risk to surface water quality arising from the release of sediment. Pollutant/contaminant releases can result in significant impacts on the aquatic environment. Predicted magnitude of such impacts is temporary moderate to significant adverse. Accidental release of pumped materials from dammed areas during open cut water crossings may give rise to downstream contamination, with the predicted impact being temporary moderate adverse. <u>HDD Crossing</u> The use of bentonite in the HDD process may give rise to downstream contamination, with the predicted impact being temporary slight to moderate. <u>Temporary Construction Compounds and Laydown Areas</u>	<u>Surface water Quality Protection</u> • Construction activities will be planned. • Tracking beside watercourses will be avoided. • A 15m buffer to watercourses will be maintained. • Cleared areas will be left open for a short a period as is reasonably practical. • Reinstatement method statements will be overseen by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) • Concrete trucks will be covered and concrete operations next to water will be avoided where possible. • Wheel washing will take place off-site and away from water where possible. • Wastes/pollutants/contaminants will be managed in accordance with statutory requirements and best practice. • Construction compounds will not be located in a flood zone or within 50m of a watercourse. • Silt fencing will be installed under ECoW supervision before construction and will be monitored daily.	Imperceptible to slight

	Ground damage arising from vehicles/machinery may affect surface run-off patterns, creating alternative flow paths, promoting erosion and localised flooding, with the predicted impact being temporary moderate adverse.	• Restoration post-construction will be carried out in agreement with IFI. <u>Silt Control</u> Control measures will include of silt fences and traps	
Hydromorphology, Water Contributions and Drainage	<u>Open Cut Crossing</u> A temporary impermeable barrier will directly impact the cross section of the channel and is expected to give rise to localised, temporary changes in water depth, velocities and sediment erosion/deposition. The predicted impact being temporary slight to moderate adverse. <u>HDD Crossing</u> Surface water contributions, drainage patterns and hydromorphology will not be significantly affected by HDD activity. <u>Construction Compounds and Laydown Areas</u> Hydromorphology and drainage patterns will not be significantly affected. All reasonable measures will be taken to avoid unplanned disruptions to any water supply and drainage infrastructure services. <u>Hydromorphology</u> Site restoration works will be undertaken after completion of water crossings, in agreement with IFI. Impacts on water depth,	The following additional general mitigation is proposed: - • An ECoW will be appointed. • Confirmatory pre-construction surveys will be carried out and seasonal constraints will be confirmed. • Adherence to IFI document 'Guidelines on Protecting Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters (2016). • The IFI Biosecurity Protocol for Field Survey Works will be complied with. • Avoidance of extreme rainfall or high flow events and management of watercourse crossings to minimise impact on flood risk. • Monitoring of watercourse levels during construction. • In the event of a flood warning, plant/materials that are vulnerable will be relocated to areas not at risk of flooding.	

	velocities and sediment erosion/deposition are predicted to be imperceptible.	
Flood Risk	<u>Open Cut Crossing</u> The cable route is in the upper catchment of relevant watercourses, where the affected volume of water is small and manageable. The predicted impact ranges from slight to significant adverse. <u>Existing Cable Ducts</u> Existing cable ducts will have a neutral effect on flood risk during construction. <u>HDD Crossing</u> HDD crossing of the Cuckoo Stream at Dublin Airport may impact on surface water flows, with the impact predicted to be imperceptible. <u>Construction Compounds and Laydown Areas</u> Compounds and laydowns will be a min. 50m from watercourses and flood zones, where they could influence surface water flow paths. The impact is predicted to range from slight to significant adverse depending on the compound/laydown location.	
Operation and Maintenance		
The potential for adverse impacts during operation are considered unlikely.		

Decommissioning
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development
Cumulative Impacts
Consideration is given to cumulative impacts associated with MetroLink, which it is acknowledged has the potential to give rise to a risk to surface water quality arising from release of contaminants/pollutants. The predicted impact is slight adverse due to construction timings at the proposed intersection being unlikely to coincide and the distance from the intersection to any watercourse. Regarding other projects, Section 9.4.5.2 states that engagement with other developers and both planning authorities will take place, to discuss scheduling and ensure that appropriate mitigation is in place to minimise impacts.

10.8.13. Assessment

10.8.14. As can be seen above, the EIAR predicts the potential for significant impacts in respect of surface water quality, arising from open cut crossings, and flood risk, arising from both open cut crossings and the provision of temporary construction compounds and laydown areas.

10.8.15. I note that IFI made a detailed submission on the application, which makes a number of points of relevance to surface water. In particular, the submission advises that an Environmental Management Plan and Pollution Control Plan should be developed and also that IFI written approval is required for any in-stream works. It further advises that works should be carried out in accordance with IFI documents 'Guidelines on Protecting Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' and 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment'.

10.8.16. Impacts on Surface Water Quality

10.8.17. Regarding impacts on surface water quality, I acknowledge the statement at Section 9.4.1.1 of the EIAR that the precise crossing method will be determined following site investigation and in agreement with IFI and that open cut crossings may not be utilised. Notwithstanding, I give consideration to potential impacts in the following paragraphs.

10.8.18. In the case of open cut crossing, I agree that such works have the potential for **moderate-significant adverse** impacts on surface water quality in the absence of mitigation. Such works by their nature involve close interaction with surface waters, requiring excavation and clearance, storage, use of in-water installations and working within the dried-out area and there is a risk of suspended solids and or contaminants/pollutants being discharged to the water body as works progress.

10.8.19. The applicant proposes a range of mitigation measures, in particular relating to adherence to advice contained within the IFI document 'Guidelines on Protecting Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' (2016) and the appointment of an ECoW to oversee works. They also propose a 15m buffer zone between storage zones and working areas, the usage of silt traps/fences and control of vehicle movements in the vicinity of open water in order to minimise potential ground rutting.

- 10.8.20. These measures, which are consistent with measures contained within the IFI submission, are established practice for working near open water and I am satisfied that they will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of water quality within receiving waters during construction. The requirement for IFI's written consent for in-stream works provides further support for the protection of receiving water quality during construction.
- 10.8.21. Regarding the IFI recommendation that an Environmental Management Plan and Pollution Control Plan should be developed, whilst such proposals are not expressly contained within Chapter 9 of the EIAR I note that elsewhere within the EIAR the applicant commits to preparing and implementing a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), an outline version of which is contained at Appendix D of the EIAR.
- 10.8.22. The Commission will note that the F.I. stage document PFAS Strategy for HV Cables commits to avoiding in-stream works at each of the Mayne River, Santry River, Sluice and Cuckoo Stream each of which has recorded PFAS presence.
- 10.8.23. Flood Risk
- 10.8.24. Regarding flood risk, Section 9.4.1.3 of the EIAR states that by reference to Figure 9.1, the significance of the effect arising from open cut crossings ranges from slight to significant. It is unstated within the EIAR how the impact prediction was reached, but it appears to relate to flood risk categorisation outlined in Figure 9.1. Figure 9.1 represents the 0.1% AEP fluvial flood risk and I note there are a number of interactions with flood zones (identified in red on Figure 9.1)
- 10.8.25. In view of its subterranean nature and construction characteristics, I am satisfied that the development does not increase the risk of flooding downstream. It is itself designed to not be vulnerable to flooding, with the exception of link boxes, and the applicant outlines at Section 9.3.3 of the EIAR that the location of link boxes has been chosen to avoid Flood Zones A and B. I therefore am of the opinion that the development will not give rise to a significant impact in respect of flood risk.
- 10.8.26. Notwithstanding, I note that the applicant proposes that works will be avoided during extreme rainfall or in high flow periods and also undertakes that no plant or

materials will be left within a flood zone during these periods. I am satisfied that this approach will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of a flood event.

10.8.27. In relation to temporary construction compounds and laydown areas, I note the applicant's submission at Section 6.4.4 of the EIAR, that the locations of these facilities cannot be determined at this point and will be the subject of a separate planning application in the future. For the purposes of this EIA assessment, I note that a set of environmental parameters is provided, that will be adhered to, and of relevance to the protection of surface water quality the applicant undertakes that compounds will not be located within a flood zone and will be located a minimum of 50m from watercourses, with measures incorporated in order to prevent run-off from entering downstream waters. I am satisfied that these measures will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of flood risk during construction.

10.8.28. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.

10.8.29. Water Framework Directive

10.8.30. As I have outlined in the previous section, the WFD requires all Member States to protect and improve water quality in all waters so that 'Good' water quality status is achieved by 2027 at the latest. The cable route is located within the Liffey and Dublin Bay and Nanny-Devlin WFD catchments.

10.8.31. Table 9.7 of the EIAR identifies that the Mayne and Santry rivers and the Sluice, Cuckoo, Dunbro and Barberstown streams are crossed by the cable alignment. I note that the Dunbro and Barberstown form part of the Ward River waterbody and the Cuckoo forms part of the Mayne waterbody. Table 9.7 also outlines WFD water quality status for each of these watercourses but I note that it is outdated, as it is based on the 2016-2021 period. Since submission of the application, status updates for the 2019-2024 period have been published² and having considered these updated records, I note that each of the Mayne, Cuckoo, Santry and Sluice continues to have 'poor' WFD status, whilst the Barberstown and Dunbro each continues to have 'moderate' status.

² Available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

- 10.8.32. I have given consideration to publicly available EPA information³ in respect of the pressures on each of these waterbodies and note that urban run-off is an identified pressure in a number of instances.
- 10.8.33. I note that, in line with commitments made in the Water Action Plan 2024, a large list of potential 'Heavily Modified Water Bodies' (HMWBs) have been identified by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The following surface water bodies, crossed by the proposed development, are included in the list of candidate HMWBs: Ward River, Mayne River, Santry River.
- 10.8.34. The ability to designate certain waterbodies as HMWBs arises from the WFD and they are defined as a body of surface water which, as a result of physical alterations by human activity, is substantially changed in character. Waterbodies can be designated as HMWBs where the changes necessary for achieving Good Ecological Status would have significant adverse effects on the wider environment, on navigation, recreation, water storage activities (e.g. drinking-water supply, power generation or irrigation), flood protection, land drainage, or other sustainable human development activities. They can also be designated where the beneficial objectives served by the artificial or modified characteristics of the water body cannot, for reasons of technical feasibility or disproportionate costs, reasonably be achieved by other means, which are a significantly better environmental option.
- 10.8.35. The main implication of the designation of a waterbody as a HMWB is that instead of having the standard environmental objective of GES, they have an alternative objective of Good Ecological Potential (GEP). GEP takes account of the changes in aquatic ecology caused by the physical modification.
- 10.8.36. At the time of completion of this report while a public consultation exercise had been undertaken, the designation of the abovementioned waterbodies as HMWBs has not taken place.
- 10.8.37. The potential for reductions in receiving surface water quality arising from the proposed development has been addressed in the previous section and of particular importance, I have pointed out that the precise means of crossing each waterbody will be agreed with IFI and that works will be undertaken in accordance with best

³ Available at www.catchments.ie

practice IFI guidance. I am satisfied that, subject to implementation of proposed mitigation, there will be no significant impact in terms of reduced receiving surface water quality. With respect to the WFD, I am satisfied that the development will not impede measures intended to improve water quality within these waterbodies in the future.

10.8.38. Cumulative Impacts

10.8.39. In respect of MetroLink, the assessment considers there is potential for cumulative impacts on surface water quality. The significance of these impacts is predicted to be slight in both instances, as the projects involve different timelines at the points of intersection and in view of the distance to receiving waters from these points.

10.8.40. Consideration is not given to specific other developments, but the applicant commits to engagement with relevant developers including DAA, IDA and ESB along with FCC and DCC, to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented and impacts minimised.

10.8.41. I agree that the proposed development has the potential to interact with other projects, in respect of reducing surface water quality during construction. With the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures as outlined in the EIAR and with implementation of similar measures on other construction sites, I am satisfied that no significant cumulative residual impacts are likely to arise.

10.8.42. Conclusion

10.8.43. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts in respect of Surface Water and Flooding during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.9. **Biodiversity**

10.9.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.9.2. Biodiversity is addressed at Chapter 10 of the EIAR. It is stated to have been carried out in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance and included a mix of desktop assessment, consultations and a range of surveys.

10.9.3. Receiving Environment

10.9.4. The majority of the proposed cable development follows existing roadways, but in some instances the development will be required to pass through improved agricultural grasslands, amenity grasslands and arable lands, and in the vicinity of hedgerows, planted trees, treelines, scrub habitat. Additionally, the proposed cable route is proximal to and / or traverses several watercourses.

10.9.5. The River Santry, River Mayne, Cuckoo Stream and Sluice Stream are each within c.100m of the cable route. Tables 10-11, 10-12 and 10-13 summarise the characteristics of each of these watercourses.

10.9.6. The proposed cable route does not encroach into any designated European site, with Table 10-5 identifying those sites in the vicinity of the route. Baldoyle Bay SAC/SPA are identified as the closest sites, at 2.6km from the route. Baldoyle Bay is also identified as the closest Ramsar site to the route, at 2.3km away.

10.9.7. Baldoyle Estuary, North Bull Island and Rogerstown Estuary are designated as Nature Reserves and are located approximately 2.3km, 3.1km and 7.8km from the development site respectively. North Bull Island and Rogerstown Estuary are also designated as wildfowl sanctuaries. Dublin Bay is designated as a UNESCO Biosphere reserve.

10.9.8. There are a number of proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) in the vicinity of the route, including Santry Demesne (Site Code 0178, 0.6km away), Feltrim Hill (Site Code 1208, 1km away), Sluice River Marsh (Site Code 1763, 1.5km away) and Baldoyle Bay (Site Code 0199, 2.3km away).

10.9.9. There are National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) records for 3 No. threatened flowering plant species (Blue Fleabane, Smooth Brome and Spring Vetch) within grid squares O14 and O24 that encompass the proposed development. The species are not protected under Flora (Protection) Order 2022.

10.9.10. NBDC records indicate the presence of the following mammals within the above-mentioned grid squares: Brown long-eared bat, Daubenton's bat, Eurasian

badger, Eurasian pigmy shrew, Eurasian red squirrel, European otter, Lesser noctule, Natterer's bat, Pine marten, Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, West European hedgehog, Mountain hare. The amphibians common frog and smooth newt were also encountered in this area.

10.9.11. Table 10-20 summarises the bird species of conservation interest observed during field surveys, which include curlew, linnet, grey wagtail, skylark, meadow pipit, yellowhammer and tree sparrow.

10.9.12. 2 No. badger setts were encountered along the proposed MetroLink cable development route, within the vicinity of the Belcamp cable connection joint bay site, just north of the R139. Another probable sett was encountered along the Ballystruan to Forrest Little cable route, just south of the R108. Each is stated to have shown signs of recent activity.

10.9.13. Each of common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, leisler's bat and unidentified pipistrelle were encountered during bat surveys undertaken as part of the MetroLink project. No potential bat roost sites were recorded within proposed works areas.

10.9.14. Table 10-10 identifies Annex I listed bird species recorded in the vicinity of the project, whilst tables 10-14 and 10-15 identify wintering birds and breeding birds records.

10.9.15. Japanese knotweed was recorded at several locations within the zone of interest.

10.9.16. Potential Impacts

10.9.17. Table 4 below summarises the Biodiversity impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Biodiversity	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Designated sites	Specified designated sites are at risk from reduced surface water quality caused by emission of contaminants/pollutants and from the introduction of invasive species. The predicted impact in each instance is significant adverse .	Proposed mitigation is outlined in the Natura Impact Statement provided with the application	No significant impacts are predicted. Slight / slight-moderate local impacts predicted in respect of habitat loss
Habitat loss	There will be a loss of or disturbance to up to 4.1ha of woodland/scrub and 90m of hedgerow/treeline habitat of local importance (higher value). Works will also be required within up to 0.4ha of wet grassland. The predicted impacts are permanent moderate adverse .	- Habitat clearance will be minimised and avoided where possible - Hedgerow/treeline reinstatement will take place where possible. Where not possible, bolstering will take place on either side as compensation. - Site will be returned as close as possible to their pre-existing condition. Grassland verges will be seeded with wildflower mix of Irish provenance. The contractor will commit to a 5-year after-care plan for hedging, grassland and agricultural reinstatement. - An agronomist will inspect and report on the establishment phase of all vegetation and will advise on corrective measures required to ensure good condition.	
Spread of Invasive Species	There is a risk of spread of Japanese Knotweed where works take place in the vicinity of stands. The predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse .	- A full invasive species survey will be carried out pre-construction. - Areas encountered will be marked as restricted areas and will include a buffer as required	

		• Toolbox talks will take place, to provide information on how to identify invasive species • Machinery will be steam-cleaned prior to entry to /exist from a site.
Rare and Protected Fauna	No protected flora was recorded in surveys or have been outlined in the desk study. No impacts are likely but on a precautionary basis preconstruction surveys are appropriate in works at field margins.	• A confirmatory survey for Smooth brome will be completed prior to construction. In the event that a plant(s) is found, protective measures will be developed in consultation with NPWS
Aquatic Ecology / Fisheries	Pollution/contamination of the River Mayne and Cuckoo Stream may give rise to reduced fisheries value and moderate to low water quality. In the case of HDD crossings, the predicted impact is temporary slight adverse. In the case of trenched crossings, the predicted impact is temporary slight-moderate adverse.	• Construction will be undertaken in accordance with IFI guidance • The July-September restriction on in-stream works will apply. This will be agreed with the IFI. • Method statements will be agreed with IFI for all watercourse crossings. • Pollution control measures will be implemented under the supervision of the EnCoW • No concrete batching will take place on site; quick setting concrete will be used; wash down will take place in a sealed environment; in-stream concrete pours will take place in an isolated, dry works area and under supervision of the EnCoW; waste concrete slurry will be disposed of to a licensed depot, any concrete spills will be immediately communicated to the employer's representative team
Fauna	<u>Badger</u> Existing badger setts may be subject to temporary noise and vibration impacts during construction.	• Confirmatory surveys will be undertaken to confirm the results of those already completed.

	Should additional badger setts establish prior to construction, there is potential for direct and disturbance impacts. The predicted impact is permanent significant adverse. <u>Otter</u> No otter holts or couches were recorded within the Zol. Should holts establish prior to construction, there is potential for direct and disturbance impacts. The predicted impact is temporary moderate adverse. <u>Breeding birds</u> Vegetation clearance may result in a loss of nesting habitat. If carried out in the nesting season, there may be direct impacts for birds nesting in scrub, treeline and hedgerow habitats. Disturbance is likely to result in temporary movement out of the Zol and the predicted impact in temporary moderate adverse. <u>Wintering birds</u> Noise during construction will not result in significant disturbance event for these species. <u>Bats</u> Hedgerow/treeline/scrub removal may give rise to loss of foraging habitat. Roost features may establish prior to construction. The predicted impact is permanent slight adverse.	• No heavy machinery will be operated within 30m of a badger sett, unless under licence, lighter machinery will not be used within 20m and hand digging/clearance will not take place within 10m. None of these works will take place within 50m during the breeding season. • If a bat roost is encountered, licences will be secured from NPWS as necessary. Where timing allows, emergence surveys may also be carried out • Vegetation clearance (except that with no nesting potential) will take place outside of the breeding season where possible. If a nesting bird is found, an exclusion zone will be established. • A confirmatory survey will be undertaken for frog prior to construction. Should frogs be recorded, translocation of the species will take place under licence. Where common frog is recorded within the footprint of the works, spawn will be captured and removed from affected habitat by hand net and translocated to the nearest area of available suitable habitat.	
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	<u>Amphibians</u> Amphibians present near the cable route may be impacted by works within drainage ditch habitat. The predicted impact is permanent slight adverse.	
		The following general suite of mitigation measures is also proposed: - • Pre-construction confirmatory surveys of identified significant ecological receptors to update the findings of completed surveys. Proposed mitigation will be refined as necessary. • An ECoW will be appointed to oversee mitigation. If this employee does not have relevant expertise, an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnCoW) will be appointed with responsibility for water quality and other environmental protection measures. • An independent EnCoW will be appointed, to review and comment on relevant mitigation and monitoring reports. • Monitoring will take place at river crossings, where works take place close to invasive species stands, potential roost features or at badger setts.
Operational and Maintenance		
No potential significant adverse impacts are identified during operation/maintenance.		
Decommissioning		
Works associated with decommissioning will be similar to those associated with the construction phase. Provided appropriate mitigation is used, the impacts of the decommissioning phase should be similar to those at the construction phase.		
Cumulative Impacts		

Consideration is given to cumulative impacts associated with MetroLink and other developments in the vicinity.
Regarding MetroLink, likely **significant cumulative adverse** impacts in respect of impacts on breeding birds and fish species.

Regarding other projects, Section 10.6.5.2 states that engagement with other developers and both planning authorities will take place, to discuss scheduling.

10.9.18. Assessment

10.9.19. As can be seen above, the EIAR predicts the potential for significant impacts in respect of surface water quality within designated sites, the spread or introduction of alien invasive species to designated sites and disturbance of badgers during construction. It should be noted that these are predicted are based on the without mitigation scenario.

10.9.20. Moderate impacts are predicted in respect of woodland/scrub and hedgerow/treeline habitat; the spread of Japanese knotweed more generally; direct and disturbance impacts on otter; and disturbance of breeding birds. Again, these impacts are predicted based on the without mitigation scenario.

10.9.21. Impacts on Designated Sites

10.9.22. Impacts on designated sites for nature conservation relate to European sites (SACs and SPAs), nationally designated sites (NHAs/pNHAs) and other designations. The assessment overlaps with the Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement report (which itself directly addresses potential impacts on European sites) and predicts that, in the absence of mitigation measures, the development has the potential to have significant adverse impacts on a number of sites.

10.9.23. For European sites the assessment predicts the potential for significant adverse impacts on 6 No. sites, namely: Baldoyle Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Malahide Estuary SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA and Malahide Estuary SPA.

10.9.24. For NHAs/pNHAs the assessment predicts the potential for significant adverse impacts on 4 No. sites, namely: Baldoyle Bay pNHA, Malahide Estuary pNHA, North Dublin Bay pNHA and Rogerstown Estuary pNHA and each of these sites is identified as contiguous to the previously discussed European sites.

10.9.25. A number of other designated sites are also identified as having the potential to be significantly impacted, namely: Dublin Bay Unesco site, Baldoyle Estuary Natura Reserve, North Bull Island Nature Reserve, Rogerstown Estuary Nature Reserve and North Bull Island Wildfowl Sanctuary.

- 10.9.26. As the EIAR outlines, a contamination or pollution event during either the construction or operational phases has the potential to have a significant negative impact on water quality with receiving waters, affecting aquatic and wetland habitats in the receiving environment and also affecting fauna species that utilise these habitats for foraging and commuting.
- 10.9.27. I have discussed the issue in the context of Surface Water, in the previous section, and would reiterate that the applicant proposes a range of mitigation measures, in particular relating to adherence to advice contained within the IFI document 'Guidelines on Protecting Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' (2016) and the appointment of an ECoW to oversee works. They also propose a 15m buffer zone between storage zones and working areas, the usage of silt traps/fences and control of vehicle movements in the vicinity of open water in order to minimise potential ground rutting.
- 10.9.28. These measures, which are consistent with measures contained within the IFI submission, are established practice for working near open water and I am satisfied that they will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of water quality within a designated site during construction. The requirement for IFI's written consent for in-stream works provides further support for the protection of receiving water quality during construction.
- 10.9.29. Regarding the risk of introduction/spread of invasive species, Section 10.4.4.2 of the EIAR states that Japanese Knotweed was encountered in several locations within the zone of interest and these locations are identified in Appendix F of the EIAR. Accidental spread of Japanese Knotweed may result in degradation of receiving habitats (both aquatic and terrestrial) and, in the case of European sites, may cause degradation of QI habitat and supporting habitat for SCI species.
- 10.9.30. More specifically, and with reference to the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance document 'The Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on National Roads' (2020), these species can potentially: -
1. Out-compete native vegetation, affecting plant community structure and habitat for wildlife.

2. Cause damage to infrastructure including road carriageways, footpaths, walls and foundations.
3. Result in soil erosion and collapse of river banks through exposure of the soil during winter floods when the IAPS die back.
4. Have an adverse effect on landscape quality through a loss of naturalness, aesthetics and regional identity.
5. Impact on road safety by blocking sightlines at junctions and road signage in general.

10.9.31. In order to mitigate the risk of introduction/spread, the applicant commits to undertaking a full invasive species survey prior to commencement of development, with identified stands marked and identified as restricted, and at Table 19.2 of the EIAR they commit to the preparation of an invasive species management plan.

10.9.32. The applicant's approach is consistent with the TII guidance, which advocates for a phased approach to invasive species management, including site assessment, management plan preparation, implementation of control methods and undertaking of post-control monitoring. I am satisfied that the approach will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of the introduction or spread of invasive species.

10.9.33. Notwithstanding the above, I note that an outline version of the invasive species management plan was not submitted with the application and it is not mentioned as part of the biodiversity-related mitigation proposals. Adopting a precautionary approach, I consider it appropriate that a condition should be attached requiring the applicant to submit the invasive species management plan for the written agreement of both planning authorities prior to the commencement of development.

10.9.34. Disturbance of Badgers

10.9.35. According to Section 10.6.2.8 of the EIAR 3 No. badger setts were identified during site walkovers and, whilst not directly affected by the works, they may be affected by temporary noise and vibration effects during construction. The EIAR assessment also advises that should additional badger setts establish prior to the commencement of development, they may experience direct disturbance impacts.

10.9.36. The applicant commits to undertaking a preconstruction survey for badgers, with additional measures to be undertaken as necessary in accordance with TII guidance document 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers during the Construction of National Road Schemes'. They propose that no heavy machinery will be used within 30m of badger setts (unless carried out under licence from the NPWS), no light machinery will be used within 20m of a sett entrance, no light work will take place within 10m of a sett entrance and no works will take place within 50m of a badger sett during the breeding season.

10.9.37. I would firstly note that badgers and their setts are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1976 and it is an offence to intentionally kill or injure a protected species or to wilfully interfere with or destroy a breeding site or resting place. From the information provided, I note that no direct impacts on badgers are predicted. The proposed mitigation strategy is consistent with the TII guidance, which advises that a pre-construction survey should be undertaken 10-12 months in advance of construction and with a further survey immediately before site clearance and that buffers of the order proposed should be maintained from heavy and light works. I am satisfied that the applicant's approach will be effective in addressing the risk of disturbance of nearby badgers and that there will be no significant impact on this species during construction.

10.9.38. Other Impacts

10.9.39. Regarding loss of woodland/scrub and hedgerow/treeline habitat, the EIAR points out that the development will necessitate the loss of scrub (WS1), broadleaved woodland (WD1), treelines (WL2) and hedgerow (WL1) habitats. I note that in accordance with the EIAR 's categorisation of habitat types, each of these affected habitat types is considered to be of local importance (higher value).

10.9.40. An estimate of the extent of habitat loss is contained in Table 10.25 of the EIAR. The loss of such habitat is unfortunate, however; I accept that in view of the scale and linear nature of the project and the types of landscape it traverses, some habitat loss or clearance is inevitable. I do not consider the impact of such habitat loss would have an impact beyond the local level and I agree that the local impact would be moderate.

- 10.9.41. By reference to the proposed mitigation, I note that the applicant commits to avoidance of broadleaved woodland clearance where possible and in the case of cleared treelines and hedgerow habitat, they commit to bolstering the retained extent of these habitats. I consider this is a practical response to the predicted impact and will serve to minimise the extent of habitat loss.
- 10.9.42. Regarding the risk of spread of Japanese Knotweed more generally, I have addressed this in the context of designated sites and my conclusions are equally applicable in the wider context. I do not consider there is a risk of a significant impact in respect of this issue and I consider the applicant's mitigation strategy will be effective in addressing the risk of introduction or spread of this invasive species.
- 10.9.43. Temporary moderate impacts are also predicted in respect of the disturbance of otter and breeding birds. In the case of otter, I note no signs of otter were recorded during site walkovers and the impact prediction is stated to be assessed on a precautionary basis.
- 10.9.44. No mitigation is proposed in respect of otter but I do not consider any is necessary, in view of the fact that no signs of otter presence were recorded during supporting survey work. TII guidance 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters Prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes' advises that a further otter survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of construction, in order to identify any change in baseline conditions. In view of the fact that the completed surveys identified the presence of suitable habitat within the zone of interest, I consider it reasonable that the applicant should be required to undertake a further baseline survey, prior to the commencement of development. This can be controlled by condition.
- 10.9.45. Regarding breeding birds, the applicant proposes to undertake further confirmatory pre-construction surveys, to assess risk of disturbance, and also proposes that vegetation clearance (except vegetation with no nesting potential), will take place outside of the breeding season where possible. Where nesting birds are found to be present, the applicant proposes that an exclusion zone will be established and no vegetation clearance will take place until young are presumed to have fledged, or nesting has failed. I am satisfied that the applicant's approach will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on breeding birds.

10.9.46. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.

10.9.47. Cumulative Impacts

10.9.48. In respect of MetroLink, the assessment predicts temporary significant adverse impacts, at a local scale, in respect of breeding birds and surface water quality in the absence of mitigation. For breeding birds (which includes the red listed species Yellowhammer) the predicted impact relates to vegetation clearance and loss of habitat. In respect of fish species, the predicted impact relates to reduced surface water quality.

10.9.49. Regarding cumulative impacts on breeding birds, I have considered the EIAR submitted as part of the MetroLink application (ABP-314724-22) and note that a significant adverse residual impact was predicted, at a local geographic scale, in respect of habitat loss.

10.9.50. Table 10-24 of the subject EIAR identifies the individual and cumulative impacts of both the proposed cables development and the MetroLink development but I note that the data referenced in this table was subsequently identified by TII as part of its submissions on ABP-314724-22 as inaccurate and the corrected linear extent of hedgerow loss is 6.55km and the corrected linear extent of treeline loss is 3.17km. The proposed development, which is identified as giving rise to the loss of 45m linear metres of both hedgerows and treeline, is a very small proportion of the overall scale of habitat loss. Nevertheless, I consider the residual cumulative impact of habitat loss would be **significant adverse** at a local level.

10.9.51. Regarding surface water quality, having given consideration to the MetroLink EIAR, I note that both projects incorporate mitigation that I consider will be effective in addressing the risk of reduced surface water quality. I am satisfied that there will be no cumulative significant adverse impact on surface water quality.

10.9.52. Regarding other developments, the assessment refers to the list of other projects contained in Chapter 2 of the EIAR and states that engagement with other developers will be undertaken to discuss scheduling.

10.9.53. I have outlined previously that the proposed development incorporates mitigation measures that I consider will be effective in addressing the limited impacts of the proposed development on biodiversity, in respect of protecting surface water

quality within designated sites, ensuring there is no introduction/spread of alien invasive species and there is no undue disturbance of badgers/otters/breeding birds. Other projects are likely to themselves incorporate measures that will mitigate individual impacts and ensure there is no cumulative significant impact.

10.9.54. Regarding the issue of habitat loss, other projects have the potential to exacerbate the issue, when considered alongside the entirety of the MetroLink project, however; I would reiterate that the proposed development represents a very small proportion of the extent of habitat loss arising from the overall MetroLink project. The Commission has already made a decision to grant in respect of the MetroLink Railway Order.

10.9.55. Conclusion

10.9.56. Subject to specified exceptions below, I am satisfied that the potential for significant adverse impacts can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, the proposed mitigation measures and through suitable conditions.

10.9.57. Arising from my assessment, I consider there is a likelihood of significant adverse impacts as follows:

- Cumulative impacts arising from permanent loss of Local Importance (Higher Value) habitat, when considered alongside the consented MetroLink development (ABP-314724-22) and other developments in the vicinity.

10.9.58. I am satisfied that additional practical mitigation is not available, which would have the effect of reducing the identified impact below the 'significant' level.

10.9.59. In view of the linear nature of the project, interactions with a variety of habitat types are inevitable and in some instances the loss of habitat is unavoidable. But such losses must be balanced against the very significant wider societal benefits that will accrue from the provision of a high-quality underground rail system. It is my opinion the long-term benefits of the development outweigh the identified biodiversity impacts and that the identified significant impact would not justify a refusal of the application.

10.10. Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate - Air

10.10.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.10.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Air is addressed at Chapter 11 of the EIAR. The assessment is stated to have been carried out in accordance with the Institute of air quality management's (IAQM) 'Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction' and addresses the construction impacts resulting from emissions to air.

10.10.3. The assessment considers three separate effects from dust: annoyance due to dust soiling, harm to ecological receptors, risk of human effects due to increased exposure to PM10.

10.10.4. The assessment states that to assess a worst-case scenario, construction activities along the whole alignment of each route were considered concurrently.

10.10.5. Receiving Environment

10.10.6. The subject site is located in Zone A 'Dublin conurbation' for the purposes of air quality management. Background air concentrations are presented in tables 11.6, 11.7 and 11.8.

10.10.7. Potential Impacts

10.10.8. Table 5 below summarises the Air impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Air	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Route 1: Newbury - Ballystruan	Tables 11.9, 11.10 and 11.11 together assess the risk of construction impacts, in terms of earthworks, construction and trackout phases. There is a 'medium' risk of dust soiling during earthworks. For other phases the risk is 'low'. The risk of health effects from PM ₁₀ is predicted to be 'low' or 'negligible'.	Routewide mitigation: • Develop and implement a stakeholder communications plan • Details of person responsible for air quality/dust to be displayed on site boundary. • Develop and implement a dust management plan, approved by the local authority • Record all dust and air quality complaints, identify causes and take appropriate measures • Make a complaint log available to the planning authority. • Record any exceptional incidents that cause dust and or air emissions, either on or off site, and the action taken to resolve the situation in the logbook. • Regular site inspections, with logbook available to local authority. • Avoid surface run-off; erection of screens/barriers; removal of materials as soon as possible; cover, seed or fence stockpiles. • Avoid vehicle idling and avoid use of diesel/petrol generators where practical. • Manage deliveries • Use of dust suppression techniques when cutting/grinding/sawing. • Use of covers for transport vehicles	Predicted impact is imperceptible
Route 2: Ballystruan – Forrest Little	Tables 11.12, 11.13 and 11.14 together assess the risk of construction impacts, in terms of earthworks, construction and trackout phases. There is a 'medium' risk of dust soiling during earthworks. For other phases the risk is 'low'. The risk of health effects from PM ₁₀ is predicted to be 'low' or 'negligible'.		
Route 3: Forrest Little – Belcamp (Option 2)	Tables 11.18, 11.19 and 11.20 together assess the risk of construction impacts, in terms of earthworks, construction and trackout phases. There is a 'medium' risk of dust soiling effects during earthworks. For other phases the risk is 'low'. The risk of health effects from PM ₁₀ is predicted to be 'low' or 'negligible'.		

		• Install hard surfaced haul routes, which are regularly damped down with fixed or mobile sprinkler systems, or mobile water bowzers and regularly cleaned • Access gates to be located at least 10 m from receptors where possible	
Route 3: Forrest Little – Belcamp (Option 1)	Tables 11.15, 11.16 and 11.17 together assess the risk of construction impacts, in terms of earthworks, construction and trackout phases. There is a 'high' risk of dust soiling and a 'medium' risk of PM₁₀ effects during earthworks. For other phases the risk of both is 'low'.	• Community engagement • Hold liaison meetings with other high-risk sites within 500m of the route, to coordinate and ensure particulate emissions are minimised. • Monitoring of on-site and off-site conditions, including increased inspections during specified activities	
Operational and Maintenance			
No potential significant adverse impacts are identified during operation/maintenance.			
Decommissioning			
Decommissioning impacts are considered to be similar to those predicted for the construction phase. Provided appropriate mitigation is used, the impact of the decommissioning phase on air quality should be reduced to a level that is not significant.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative impacts associated with MetroLink and other developments in the vicinity. Regarding MetroLink, the potential for cumulative air quality impacts is stated to be limited to small areas and limited in time and, thus, not significant. The risk of cumulative construction dust impacts with other projects is identified. Subject to implementation of the above-outlined mitigation, the impact is predicted to be imperceptible.			

10.10.9. Assessment

10.10.10. As the EIAR outlines, construction will result in the generation of dust and I note from the various tables in the Chapter 11 assessment that there are a number of high sensitivity receptors (residential properties) within both 20m of the cable route and 50m of a potential construction haulage route. There are no designated ecological sites within 50m of the cable route or of potential construction haulage routes.

10.10.11. Dust soiling and increased ambient PM₁₀ concentration are identified by the assessment as the most common impacts from dust emissions during construction. Dust soiling is seen as a nuisance impact, while increased exposure to PM₁₀ is identified as having the potential to impact on human health. For routes 1, 2 and 3 (Option 2) the earthworks phase of construction is predicted to give rise to a 'medium' risk of dust soiling, while for route 3 (Option 1) a high risk of dust soiling is predicted during earthworks and a medium risk of PM₁₀ effects is also predicted. For other phases, the predicted impact is low/negligible.

10.10.12. I note that the EIAR does not contain a 'without mitigation' impact magnitude prediction but it predicts an imperceptible impact on air quality following incorporation of proposed mitigation. This mitigation is outlined as a direct response to predicted impacts for each of the routes and includes site management/communication measures, monitoring, site maintenance and preparation, vehicle management, operations and specific trackout measures. In particular they propose to develop and implement a dust management plan that will be approved by the planning authorities and which will include measures to control emissions.

10.10.13. The generation of dust during construction is unavoidable and the control of same is established practice at this point, typically achieved by good construction practices. The applicant's proposed mitigation strategy accords with advice contained within the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) document 'Guidance on the Assessment of Dust From Demolition and Construction' (2024) and I am satisfied that it will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on air quality during construction.

10.10.14. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.

10.10.15. Cumulative Impacts

10.10.16. In respect of MetroLink, the assessment identifies that the cable route intersects with the tunnel alignment at Collinstown Lane and Naul Road and, subject to implementation of the proposed mitigation, air quality impacts will be limited and not significant.

10.10.17. As I have outlined above, I am satisfied that the applicant's mitigation will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on air quality during construction. The MetroLink project itself incorporates site-specific air quality management plans for each construction site and they also propose an extensive monitoring scheme, which I am satisfied will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on air quality during construction. Taken together, I am satisfied that the accumulation of mitigation will be effective in ensuring there is no significant cumulative impact in respect of dust emissions during construction.

10.10.18. Regarding the risk of cumulative impacts associated with other projects, I would again refer to my conclusions regarding the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures forming part of the current application. Other development proposals can be reasonably expected to incorporate measures that will be similarly effective in addressing the issue and ensuring there is no risk of a significant impact. Furthermore, the applicant commits to regular liaison meetings with other high-risk construction sites within 500m of the site boundary and this accords with IAQM advice regarding site management as contained within the aforementioned 2024 guidance.

10.10.19. The EIAR also considers the potential impact of cumulative traffic emissions, including from the MetroLink construction. I note that consideration is only given to the R108 between Old Airport Road and the M50 Motorway, where the predicted traffic increase exceeds the applicable threshold, and the assessment concludes that the impact, in terms of mean NO₂ levels, would be neutral.

10.10.20. Table 11.21 of the EIAR contains predicted annual mean NO₂ levels and it can be seen that at each of the receptor locations the predicted change is a max of 0.2µg/m³ (or a max change of 1%). I agree that such limited change in background levels would not result in a significant cumulative impact.

10.10.21. Conclusion

10.10.22. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts in respect of Air during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.11. Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate - Climate

10.11.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.11.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Climate, both in terms arising from the development and the vulnerability of the project to a changing climate, is addressed at Chapter 12 of the EIAR.

10.11.3. According to Section 12.2.2.1, a bespoke methodology was developed for the assessment and this involves consideration of the likelihood and severity of an event and the significance of a potential impact.

10.11.4. The Moata carbon portal, a Mott MacDonald tool for modelling the embodied and operational carbon of assets, was used to estimate construction materials emissions.

10.11.5. Receiving Environment

10.11.6. Ireland's climate is heavily influenced by the Atlantic Ocean and does not suffer from the extremes of temperatures, with a mean temperature of between 9°C and 10°C and with higher mean temperatures in coastal regions. Highest rainfall occurs in the western half of Ireland and on high ground, with rainfall decreasing towards the northeast. Averaged over all of Ireland, mean annual rainfall is 1,230mm.

10.11.7. Ireland has experienced an increase of 0.5°C in mean temperature between 1961-2010 and a 5% increase in total rainfall for the same period, with all seasons experiencing increased rainfall.

10.11.8. Climate projections are based on the EPA publication 'High-resolution Climate Projections for Ireland – A multi-model ensemble approach' (2020). Ireland is predicted to experience an increase in ambient temperature, together with drier

summers/wetter winters. We are also projected to experience increased year-round heavy rainfall events and heatwave events. Projections for Dublin are stated to generally follow the climate trends projected for Ireland.

10.11.9. Potential Impacts

10.11.10. Table 6 below summarises the Climate impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Climate	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Climate resilience	No significant impacts predicted.	• Risks associated with extreme weather events will be addressed within the CEMP and may include: - ○ Flood resilience, ○ Workforce health and safety, ○ Contingency plans.	A short term significant adverse impact is predicted
Greenhouse Gases	The development is predicted to give rise to emissions totalling 1,005,300kgCO ₂ e/km of route length and 24,100tCO ₂ e for the overall 24km cables length. The predicted impact is not quantified.	• Emissions reductions will be integrated from the early design stage, including a planned approach. • Promotion of fuel switching and efficient route scheduling. • Stakeholder engagement to reduce resource and energy consumption • Compensate unavoidable residual emissions	
Operational and Maintenance			
Climate resilience	No significant impacts predicted.	• No mitigation required.	A short term significant adverse impact is predicted
Greenhouse Gases	GHG emissions during operation are likely to be relatively large when compared to construction, due to transmission losses and sulphur hexafluoride emissions. This is predicted to reduce over time. The predicted impact is not quantified.	• All reasonable and practically achievable measures have been taken to minimise and avoid impacts • Implementation of the mitigation hierarchy and circular economy • Regular maintenance checks to ensure operation is as expected • The annual GHG emissions will be driven by the operating profile of the proposed development. The total GHG emissions will therefore be minimised by increasing efficiency and reducing conductivity losses.	

		• Stakeholder engagement to avoid physical damages and losses • Compensate unavoidable residual emissions	
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative impacts associated with MetroLink and other developments in the vicinity. <u>Climate resilience</u> MetroLink is not anticipated to have an influence on climate change on its impacts. For other developments, stakeholder engagement regarding scheduling and mitigation measures in order to minimise impacts arising from climate change. <u>Greenhouse Gases</u> GHG emissions do not result in a regional or local effects on climate and, therefore, the effects of the project's emissions on climate will not differ when combined with other developments			

10.11.11. Assessment

10.11.12. I agree with the applicant's submission that there is likely to be a negligible change in climate within the construction timeframe and that the issue has not been further considered in the EIAR submission.

10.11.13. Given the nature of the proposed development, I agree with the EIAR that the potential for significant adverse impacts on climate is associated with GHG emissions during both construction and operation. As the EIAR outlines, GHG emissions contribute to climate change and, dependent on the level of emission, the impact may be considered significant.

10.11.14. The assessment estimates that emissions totalling 24,100tCO₂e will arise during construction and this is stated to equate to 0.2% of Ireland's national total CO₂e emissions from public electricity and heat production or approximately 0.07% of Ireland's national total CO₂e emissions (based on 2021 data).

10.11.15. For the operational phase, the EIAR assessment states that GHG emissions will be 'relatively large when compared to the construction GHG emissions' but it does not quantify the level of such emissions. The assessment does, however, point out that grid losses and emissions are expected to reduce over time.

10.11.16. In predicting the significance of impacts, I note that the EIAR does not distinguish between the construction and operational phases, merely identifying that the development will result in some direct emissions during both phases and that it is reasonable to assume the impacts will be short-term significant adverse. The prediction arises from consideration of the cables development in isolation, ignoring its role in powering and enabling a low-carbon form of public transportation.

10.11.17. In assessing the impact significance of predicted GHG emissions, I have given consideration to the European Commission document 'Technical Guidance on the Climate Proofing of Infrastructure in the period 2021-2027', which advises as follows: -

"Most projects will have an impact on GHG emissions, compared to the Baseline, through their construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning and through indirect activities that occur because of the project. This should be seen in the context of the project not as an isolated event but as a set of different

and complementary interventions – in particular stemming from a plan. This might mean that a certain specific project does not have an individual net GHG reduction effect but is [an] integral part of an overall plan that reduces emissions”.

10.11.18. With this in mind, I consider it is appropriate to take a wider and longer-term view of the wider MetroLink project and to amortise the initial carbon cost associated with construction.

10.11.19. Over its operational life, MetroLink will have a substantial beneficial impact on emissions from the national fleet, by redirecting a large number of private vehicle movements to high-frequency, high-capacity public transport. TII, in justifying the project, claim that the project will create the opportunity for the diversion of 6.8 million private vehicle journeys per annum in the early years, growing to 12 million by 2045. TII also undertook as part of the MetroLink application to use renewable electricity for 100% of its operational power. In view of this wider context, I do not consider the impact of emissions during construction and operation of the proposed cables development would be significant.

10.11.20. The applicant identifies opportunities for carbon reduction but acknowledges that the effects of same are unquantifiable at this stage of the project. I accept that there will be an unavoidable level of GHG emissions during construction and operation and that the proposed measures, which can be summarised as a commitment to finding ways to limit and reduce such emissions, will be limited in their overall effect.

10.11.21. Cumulative Impacts

10.11.22. The EIAR contains a brief assessment of potential cumulative impacts, pointing out the GHG emissions impacts will not differ when considered with other impacts.

10.11.23. The applicant's point is well made; unlike many of the other environmental factors, GHG emissions are globally cumulative by their nature and in terms of their impact on the climate. With this in mind, I consider the issue to be addressed relates to whether the MetroLink project, of which the proposed cables development forms part, is aligned with Ireland's climate adaptation strategy and commitments.

10.11.24. MetroLink is a high-capacity electrified public transport project that will support a modal shift from private car to public transport and which has substantial policy support at all levels, including under the recently published second Transport Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (T-SAP II), which identifies the importance of the project to accommodating forecasted public transport demand growth. I have previously outlined the role that the project will play in facilitating/promoting modal shift and I am satisfied, taking a long-term view, the project will contribute to our national climate adaptation strategy and will have an overall beneficial impact in respect of climate.

10.11.25. Conclusion

10.11.26. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts in respect of Climate during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.12. Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate - Noise and Vibration

10.12.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.12.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Noise and Vibration is addressed at Chapter 13 of the EIAR. The assessment is stated to have been undertaken having regard to relevant legislation and guidance., including TII guidance document 'Good Practice Guidance for the Treatment of Noise during the Planning of National Road Schemes' (2014), British Standard 5228 'Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites' (2014) and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (2020).

10.12.3. The assessment considers potential airborne noise and vibration impacts at receptor locations within 300m of the site boundaries, in accordance with British Standard BS 5228. The development is broken down into a series of construction phases, as follows: -

- Ducting and trenching works,
- Horizontal directional drilling works,

- Joint bay installation works,
- Cable installation works,
- Construction laydown areas set-up.

10.12.4. Construction of impacts associated with construction traffic focusses on roads that will likely experience an increase in road traffic volumes sufficient to cause a change in noise level of at least 1 dB $L_{Aeq, T}$.

10.12.5. Section 13.1 states that operational noise associated with the relevant substations is addressed with the EIAR submitted as part of the MetroLink Railway Order application (ABP-314724-22) and is not addressed in the subject EIAR.

10.12.6. Receiving Environment

10.12.7. The existing noise environment is stated to be dominated by aircraft noise from Dublin Airport and major road traffic noise from M1, M50, R107 and R139.

10.12.8. Sensitive receptors are listed in Table 13.5 and are also identified in Figure 13.1. Table 13.7 outlines the baseline ambient daytime and night-time noise level at each receptor location and allocates each property to an assessment category, in accordance with BS 5228. It can be seen from the table that ambient day time noise levels range between 53-70dB(A) and ambient noise levels range between 45-63 dB(A).

10.12.9. Potential Impacts

10.12.10. Table 7 below summarises the Noise and Vibration impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Noise and Vibration	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Ducting & Trenching	No significant adverse impacts predicted	• A CEMP that includes noise and vibration mitigation is contained Appendix D of the EIAR. Measures to be implemented include: - ○ Selection of quiet equipment ○ Ongoing maintenance and use of silencers ○ Employee training on quiet working ○ Use of plant enclosures ○ Engagement with sensitive receptors including providing a point of contact ○ Management of deliveries ○ Implementation of site hoarding ○ In the event of a requirement for night working, details will be communicated to sensitive receptors; noisy plant will be avoided/limited; temporary noise screens will be used.	No significant residual impacts predicted.
HDD	No significant adverse impacts predicted		
Joint Bay Installation	No significant adverse impacts predicted		
Cable Installation	No significant adverse impacts predicted		
Construction Compounds and Laydown Areas	No significant adverse impacts predicted		
Construction Traffic Noise	No significant adverse impacts predicted		
Operational and Maintenance			
The proposed development will not produce any significant noise and vibration levels during operation. No significant impacts are predicted.			
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative noise impacts associated with MetroLink and developments at Dublin Airport and the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade project. Interaction with the MetroLink development may arise at Old Airport Road. The cumulative noise impact is predicted to be minor.			

In the case of the Dublin Airport developments and the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade project, predicted impacts range between not significant and minor.

10.12.11. Assessment

10.12.12. In view of the nature of the project, the potential for noise and vibration impacts arises during construction and I note from the EIAR assessment that construction will involve a number of phases.

10.12.13. Figure 13.1 of the EIAR identifies the receptor locations chosen for assessment and I am satisfied that they are representative of locations along the entirety of the cable route alignment. Section 13.3.2 of the EIAR points out that the receiving environment is dominated by aircraft noise associated with Dublin Airport and major road traffic noise from the M1, M50, R107 and R139.

10.12.14. The EIAR assessment has been undertaken based on the British Standard 5228 'ABC Method', which is established practice for proposed developments in Ireland. Having considered the various assessment summary tables presented in the assessment, I note that there a number of errors of respect of the categorisation of receptor locations (i.e. whether they are in category A, B or C). Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that the correct significance categorisation has been applied when considering ambient and predicted noise levels.

10.12.15. Potential significant noise impacts are predicted during ducting and trenching works, joint bay installation works and cable installation works. In each instance the potential impact is subject to the qualification 'depending on duration' and, in view of the short-term duration of the predicted noise impact at each location, the assessment ultimately concludes that the impact will not be significant.

10.12.16. As I have outlined above, the noise assessment is based on the BS5228 ABC Method, which outlines that a significant noise impact may arise if the relevant threshold is exceeded for (a) period of 10 or more working days in any 15 consecutive days, or (b) a total number of days exceeding 40 in any 6 consecutive months. The assessment outlines that ducting and trenching will progress at a rate of 30-50m per day and with noise impacts experienced for 1-2 days, joint bay installation will take a couple of days at each location and with noise impacts experienced for no more than 5 days and cable installation will progress at a rate of 150m per day and with noise impacts experienced for 1-2 days.

- 10.12.17. The duration of predicted impacts is very brief in each instance and I accept, based on the BS5228 methodology, that the impact will not be significant. Notwithstanding, the applicant proposes mitigation that I consider is standard practice in reducing noise from construction sites and which will be effective in this instance. In particular they propose to prepare and implement a CEMP and will employ a variety of plant and machinery selection and operation measures and site management measures.
- 10.12.18. I note that the assessment recommends that night-time working is not recommended in areas with high residential density and, where such works are necessary, that the requirement should be communicated to nearby sensitive receptors, noisy plant should not be used and noise screens should be used in order to reduce disturbance.
- 10.12.19. FCC similarly requested as part of its recommended conditions (Condition No. 4) that works should not take place after 7pm unless there are exceptional circumstances and subject to its written approval. The recommended condition also includes a requirement for noise abatement measures in accordance with BS5228 and in particular adherence to threshold limit values at noise sensitive receptor locations.
- 10.12.20. The applicant is resistant to time restrictions on construction and, in its response to the FCC submission, pointed to a likely requirement for night-time working and that such works will be subject to a road opening licence and associated conditions.
- 10.12.21. In view of the nature of the development, I consider the applicant's request to facilitate night-time working is reasonable. The applicant indicates they will accept a condition requiring noise abatement measures in accordance with BS5228 and I am satisfied that this approach will be effective in ensuring there is no significant noise impact as part of any required night-time works. I have addressed FCC's recommended conditions in previous sections.
- 10.12.22. I agree that construction vibration will not be significant, in view both the duration of works and the level of separation from receptor locations. I also agree that construction traffic noise will not be significant.

- 10.12.23. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.
- 10.12.24. Cumulative Impacts
- 10.12.25. In respect of MetroLink, the assessment predicts that receptor locations along Old Airport Road will experience cumulative noise levels, with the subject development considered the dominant noise source as it is closer to the receptors.
- 10.12.26. MetroLink is in tunnel between the Dublin Airport North Portal (DANP), which is on the north side of Naul Road, and the Dublin Airport South Portal (DASP), which is on the south side of Old Airport Road. Both areas are currently characterised by greenfield lands but will be developed for the duration of MetroLink construction, as construction compounds/sites.
- 10.12.27. I have previously outlined that construction will progress at a reasonably fast rate for the cables development, with receptor locations experiencing noise impacts for at most a couple of days. There are no sensitive receptors in the area of the DANP or DASP and, whilst there may be high noise levels when the projects interact, I am satisfied that there will be no cumulative significant noise impact.
- 10.12.28. In respect of other development, the assessment identifies other developments within the compounds of the Airport but states that it can be expected that noise levels at receptors will be dominated by local ambient conditions and the proposed development and thus does not predict a significant cumulative impact.
- 10.12.29. Dublin Airport and its environs continue to evolve and there are a number of ongoing and planned developments, that are likely to generate noise of varying levels. As the assessment points out, there is a relatively high ambient noise level in the area, due to airport operations, so additional noise generating activities are likely to contribute to the existing environment rather than transform it. The proposed cables development will not itself be a significant noise generating development and whilst it may briefly contribute to cumulative noise levels at individual properties as the works progress, such interaction will be very brief and I am satisfied that the impact will not be significant.
- 10.12.30. Conclusion
- 10.12.31. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts in respect of Noise and Vibration during construction and operation are unlikely. I am also

satisfied that proposed mitigation measures will be effective in mitigating the limited impact of the development.

10.13. Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and the Landscape - Landscape

10.13.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.13.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of The Landscape is addressed at Chapter 14 of the EIAR. The assessment includes separate landscape and visual impact assessments.

10.13.3. The assessment is stated to have been carried out in accordance with relevant guidance and comprised a desktop assessment based on 500m radius study area. The study area is identified in Figure 14.1.

10.13.4. Receiving Environment

10.13.5. The study area is located north of Dublin City and with Dublin Airport at its centre. Other than the airport lands, the area has mixed landcover, ranging from farmed open fields to built-up industrial and commercial with clusters of residential. The area is predominantly low-lying, with elevation decreasing slightly toward the south and east.

10.13.6. In the administrative area of FCC, the route alignment is located in the 'low lying type' landscape, which is stated to be of modest value and have low landscape value. A section of the alignment along the R108 to the north of Dublin airport runs along the border of a 'historic landscape characterisation area' in Swords. Similarly, a section of the cable route goes through the settlement of Kinsealy, where there is an area identified as a 'highly sensitive landscape'. Vegetation subject to a 'Protect & Preserve Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows' objective occurs within a 'Nature Development Area' at St. Doolagh's Church. The route also adjoins a 'Nature Development Area' at Belcamp College c.530m to the south of St. Doolagh's Church.

10.13.7. There are no recorded designated views within the study area.

10.13.8. A very small section of the route alignment encroaches into the administrative area of DCC, where it interacts with the Z6 (Employment/Enterprise), Z9 (Amenity/Open Space Lands/Green Network) and Z14 (SDRA) zonings.

10.13.9. Potential Impacts

10.13.10. Table 8 below summarises the Landscape impact assessment presented in the EIAR.

Landscape	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Landscape	Construction will have a temporary impact on the landscape but will be viewed in the context of a busy developed environment. Impact magnitude is deemed to be medium-low and the predicted significance is slight in the immediate surrounds of the cable route, reducing to imperceptible and imperceptible-slight within the wider study area.	• No mitigation proposed.	No residual impacted are predicted.
Visual	Receptors have a medium-low visual sensitivity and are not susceptible to temporary visual change within the road corridor. The predicted impact is slight adverse within open countryside and imperceptible-slight adverse within road corridors		
Operational and Maintenance			
No significant impacts are predicted.			
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative noise impacts associated with MetroLink and the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Update. If construction phases coincide, there may be a marginal intensification of construction at intersecting locations for a brief period, with the predicted impact being imperceptible-slight.			

10.13.11. Assessment

10.13.12. The receiving environment is characterised by Dublin Airport and its environs, which includes a number of busy roads and commercial and industrial land uses, and the presence of construction works and machinery is commonplace. I agree with the EIAR categorisation of the receiving environment as being of medium-low landscape and visual sensitivity.

10.13.13. Construction will be undertaken on a section-by-section basis and will involve excavation of developed and undeveloped ground surfaces and the presence of construction workers and machinery at various points. The EIAR outlines that works will progress rapidly, with effects being transient and temporary. In view of this and, having considered the EIAR assessment, I agree that there will be no significant landscape and visual impacts during construction or operation.

10.13.14. Cumulative Impacts

10.13.15. The assessment considers potential interactions with MetroLink and the e East Meath - North Dublin Grid Upgrade project and outlines that if construction works intersect, there may be a brief and marginal intensification of works at these locations. I agree that intersection of working sites may intensify the cumulative visual impact of works but in view of the limited duration of works at any one location and the limited impact that the proposed development will have, I am satisfied that there will be no significant cumulative landscape and visual impact.

10.13.16. Conclusion

10.13.17. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant Landscape and Visual impacts during construction and operation are unlikely.

10.14. Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and the Landscape - Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage

10.14.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.14.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage are addressed at Chapter 15 of the EIAR. The assessment is

stated to have been carried out in accordance with relevant guidance and included both desktop assessment and a field survey.

10.14.3. According to Table 15.1, the study varies according to the particular heritage factor and it ranges between 50m-250m from the route alignment.

10.14.4. Receiving Environment

10.14.5. The cable route traverses 36 No. townlands in north-west County Dublin, encompassing the administrative areas of both FCC and DCC. The route crosses a variety of landscapes ranging from industrial, urban and suburban lands, to grazing and tillage lands.

10.14.6. There are 27 Record of Monuments and Places sites within the study area (summarised in Table 15.9). Of these, 7 No. are protected structures and 2 No. are listed on the National Inventory of Archaeological Heritage (NIAH). There are two notable RMP clusters in the vicinity of St Margaret's and St. Doolaghs.

10.14.7. There are 18 No. protected structures within the study area (summarised in Table 15.10), 5 No. of which are listed on the NIAH. Of these, there is a holy well (Ref. CH111) adjacent to the site boundary.

10.14.8. There are 13 No. structures within the study area that are listed on the NIAH (summarised in Table 15.11).

10.14.9. 9 No. areas of archaeological potential are identified, all of which are associated with minor watercourses and springs.

10.14.10. There are 40 No. undesignated cultural heritage sites containing extant remains within the study area (summarised in Table 15.12). 6 No. of these sites are located within or partially within the site boundary (Refs. CH097, CH145, CH1919, CH231, CH244 and CH250). There are 114 No. undesignated cultural heritage sites that do not comprise extant remains within the study area, 31 No. of which are located within or partially within the site boundary.

10.14.11. Potential Impacts

10.14.12. Table 9 below summarises the Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage impact assessment contained within the EIAR.

Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Direct impacts	Open-trench excavation would impact on the Santry River channel (Ref. CH002) where it forms the Kilmore Big/Shrubs townland boundary. Predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.	• Appointment of a project archaeologist. • Underwater archaeological survey will be undertaken for all watercourses where damming and trenching will take place. • Advance confirmatory geophysical survey and advance confirmatory archaeological test trenching will be carried out where feasible. • It is recommended that buffer zones be established for all RMPs/Protected Structures which are adjacent to the redline boundary. • It is recommended that temporary hoarding be established to protect CH231. • Condition surveys will be undertaken of CH111, CH145, CH191 and CH231 to inform a requirement for additional mitigation • If an upstanding section of a townland boundary is to be removed, a representative section will be recorded prior to removal.	Predicted impact is slight adverse
	Open-trench excavation of an unnamed river channel (Ref. CH009) will impact on an area of archaeological potential. Predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	A portion of a ringfort (Refs. CH066, DU00427 and PS04) lies adjacent to the site boundary but is not in the line of the proposed cable trench. Amendment of the route in this area will impact this site. The zone of notification for this site is crossed by the route. The predicted impact is permanent very significant adverse .		Predicted impact is moderate adverse
	A holy well (Refs. CH111 and PS09) lies adjacent to the site boundary but is not in the line of the proposed cable trench. Amendment of the route in this area will impact this site. The predicted impact is permanent very significant adverse .		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	Surviving elements of a bridge (Ref. CH145) shown on the 1 st 6-inch Ordnance Survey Sheet would be impacted by open-trench excavation. Predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse

	Open-trench excavation would impact on St. Doolagh's Bridge (Ref. CH191). Predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.	Sub-surface works will be subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring. Finds will be subject to consultation with the National Monuments Service and efforts will be made to preserve in situ or reduce impacts.	Predicted impact is slight adverse
	Open-trench excavation would impact on an number of unnamed small stream channels (Ref. CH210, CH212, CH213, CH214, CH215), which is an area of archaeological potential. Predicted impact in each instance is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	A roadside pump (Ref. CH231) marked on the 1 st edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey Sheet lies within the site boundary but is not in the line of the proposed cable trench. Amendment of the route in this area will impact this. The predicted impact is permanent significant adverse .		Predicted impact is negligible
	A building marked as 'lodge' (Ref. CH244), associated with the Belcamp estate, identified on the 1 st edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey Sheet would be affected by open-trench excavation. The predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	Open-trench excavation would impact a spring or pool marked as 'Shanes Ford' (Ref. CH258) on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Sheet, which is an area of archaeological potential. The predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	A group of buildings arranged around a yard marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey Sheet (Ref. CH259) would be affected by open-trench excavation. The predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse
	The Stockhole/Clonshaugh townland boundary (Ref. CH261) may be crossed by the cable route. The predicted impact is permanent moderate adverse.		Predicted impact is slight adverse

	The St. Doolagh's Ecclesiastical Site (Refs. CH170-182), which includes 8 No. RMP sites, is adjacent to the cable route and the zone of notification encroaches into the site. There is a likelihood of further underground deposits beneath the road surface. The predicted impact is permanent very significant adverse.	Predicted impact is moderate adverse
Operational and Maintenance		
No significant impacts are predicted.		
Decommissioning		
No impacts predicted.		
Cumulative Impacts		
Direct impacts are limited to site boundaries, so the potential for cumulative impacts can only arise at points of overlap. No cumulative impacts predicted.		

10.14.13. Assessment

10.14.14. As can be seen above, the EIAR predicts potential very significant adverse impacts in respect of a ringfort (Ref. CH066), a holy well (Ref. CH111) and the St. Doolagh's Ecclesiastical Site (Refs. CH170-182). A potential significant adverse impact is predicted in respect of a roadside pump (Ref. CH231). I note that in each instance the predicted impact is in the absence of proposed mitigation and the assessment predicts that impacts would be reduced to a maximum of moderate adverse.

10.14.15. Having considered the EIAR assessment contained in Table 15.16, and by reference to Appendix I1 of the EIAR, I note that the applicant has developed a bespoke identification (ID) system for the sites of interest considered in the assessment. A number of the ID references appear to include Record of Monuments and Place numbers and/or Protected Structure number, but they are inconsistent with both the National Monuments Service Record of Monuments and Places and the Fingal County Development Plan and I am unclear what they relate to. For clarity, I have clarified both referencing systems in Table 10 below.

CH No.	EIAR Site Description	EIAR Ref. No.	FCC RPS Ref. No.	Record of Monuments and Places Ref. No.
CH066	Ringfort	DU00427/PS04		DU011043
CH111	Holy Well	PS08	608	
CH171	Holy Well	DU00721		DU015009004
CH173	Enclosure	DU004758		DU015009009
CH174	Graveyard	DU00723		DU015009006
CH177	Church	DU00718		DU015009001
CH179	Ecclesiastical Enclosure	DU00722		DU015009005
CH180	Field System	DU04757		DU015009008

10.14.16. In the case of both CH066 and CH111, I note from the assessment that the feature is adjacent to the cable route but not within it and is thus not directly affected by it. But the assessment acknowledges that facilitating works or variation of the cable route has the potential to impact on each feature. As part of the mitigation strategy, the applicant proposes to undertake a condition survey of CH111 to determine the requirement for necessary additional mitigation, in consultation with the National Monuments Service. They also propose a 5m buffer around the feature,

within which no works will take place, and erection of protective hoardings for the duration of works in its vicinity.

10.14.17. For CH066 the applicant proposes that a combination of geophysical survey and trial trenching will be carried out, to determine the extent of the feature, and that a buffer zone will be established around it.

10.14.18. Noting that both features are not in the direct line of the cable route, I am satisfied that the establishment of an appropriate buffer zone and a restriction on works within it will provide adequate protection during construction for both CH066 and CH111.

10.14.19. In the case of CH170-182, the assessment states that the St. Doolagh's Ecclesiastical site has been the subject of a number of archaeological investigations. It states that the full extent of the original settlement on the site is unknown and that there is potential for deposits to have remained in situ underneath the modern road surface. The applicant proposes that works in the vicinity of St. Doolagh's will be subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring and that appropriate treatment of any finds will be determined in consultation with the National Monuments Service.

10.14.20. The applicant's proposed approach is established practice for the assessment and investigation of unknown cultural heritage features and I am satisfied that it will be effective in establishing the extent of the heritage site and in providing for its protection during construction.

10.14.21. I would bring to the Commission's attention that CH170, CH172, CH175 and CH176, which are predicted to experience very significant adverse impacts in the absence of mitigation measures do not relate to any feature of interest. Rather, and by reference to Appendix I1 of the EIAR, they relate to records of historic excavations at St. Doolagh's. Accordingly, I am satisfied that they do not require further consideration in my assessment.

10.14.22. In the case of CH231, I note that the feature is not listed on the Record of Monuments and Places or the Record of Protected Structures. The assessment states that the feature lies within the application site boundary but is not in the line of the proposed cable route, but that facilitating works or variation of the cable route has the potential to impact on it. As part of the mitigation strategy, the applicant

proposes to undertake a condition survey of the feature to determine the requirement for necessary additional mitigation, in consultation with the National Monuments Service. They also recommend that temporary hoarding be established around the feature to protect it.

10.14.23. Similar to previously discussed similar impacts, I am satisfied that the applicant's approach will provide adequate protection for this feature during construction.

10.14.24. In respect of other features of interest, there are a number of other features where the assessment predicts moderate adverse impacts (CH002, CH009, CH145, CH191, CH210, CH212-CH215, CH244, CH258, CH259 and CH261) and I note that the applicant proposes a similar programme of measures for these sites. The measures include a combination of surveys, geophysical survey and trial trenching, monitoring, protective hoarding and buffer zones. None of these sites is listed on the Record of Monuments and Places and none is a Protected Structure.

10.14.25. In addition to specified mitigation measures, the applicant also commits to other general measures. This includes the appointment of a project archaeologist to oversee archaeological works; undertaking an underwater archaeological survey of all watercourses where damming and trenching will be undertaken; a combination of advance confirmatory geophysical survey and test trenching for off-road sections of the route where groundworks are required; and ongoing archaeological monitoring.

10.14.26. The Department made a submission on the application that provides broad agreement with the findings of the EIAR in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage and which recommends a number of conditions as part of any grant of permission. The applicant has also indicated they are amenable to the recommended condition.

10.14.27. I am satisfied that the applicant's approach to mitigation will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on features of heritage interest during construction.

10.14.28. I agree that there will be no significant impact during the operational phase.

10.14.29. Cumulative Impacts

10.14.30. The applicant outlines that the potential for cumulative impacts can only arise at points of overlap with other projects within the application site boundary and no cumulative impacts are predicted.

10.14.31. Regarding MetroLink, I have outlined elsewhere in my report that the route alignment is in tunnel between the DANP and DASP. The EIAR associated with that application incorporates a suite of mitigation measures that are intended to mitigate the impact of its construction on features of cultural heritage interest and I note that the Commission attached condition No. 25 to the Railway Order, which amongst other things requires consultation with the National Monuments Service on appropriate mitigation should archaeological remains be found. I recommend a similarly worded condition be attached to the Commission's Order on this application, should it decide to grant permission and, in this context, I am satisfied that there will be significant cumulative impact on features of heritage interest.

10.14.32. Other developments that may intersect with the cables route can be similarly expected to incorporate mitigation that address the potential for impacts on features of heritage interest. The proposed development will not have a significant impact on any feature and I am satisfied that it will not give rise to any likelihood of significant cumulative impacts.

10.14.33. Conclusion

10.14.34. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant impacts on Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage during construction and operation are unlikely.

10.15. Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and the Landscape - Material Assets

10.15.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.15.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Material Assets is addressed at Chapter 16 of the EIAR. The chapter considers utility use and waste management.

10.15.3. Receiving Environment

- 10.15.4. Services records obtained from ESNB indicate that there are a number of utilities, of varying diameters and depths, located along the cable route. Table 16.1 summarises the distribution of utilities across the route.
- 10.15.5. Waste is defined under the Waste Framework Directive as ‘any substance or object that the holder discards or intends to or is required to discard’. The framework provides a target of 70% of non-hazardous, non-soil and stone construction and demolition waste to be recovered, reused or recycled. Ireland achieved 78% material recovery in 2020.
- 10.15.6. Potential Impacts
- 10.15.7. Table 11 below summarises the Material Assets assessment contained within the EIAR.

Material Assets	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Utility Services	Disruptions that arise will be kept to a minimum and will be subject to prior notification. Predicted impact is temporary imperceptible-slight adverse.	- All reasonable measures will be taken to avoid unplanned disruptions to any services during the proposed works. - Prior notification of disruptions will be given to all impacted properties.	No significant residual impacts predicted.
Utility Use	Temporary construction compounds will include welfare facilities, with discharges contained in a holding tank and disposed of off-site. Water will be tankered to sites Significant impacts are considered unlikely.	No mitigation proposed.	
Waste Management	Waste will be managed in accordance with the waste management hierarchy, EPA guidance and the Waste Management Act, 1996. Predicted impact is temporary slight adverse.	A Construction Resource Management Plan is provided as part of the CEMP, contained at Appendix D. Appropriate waste handling policies will be employed and wastes sent off site will be taken by an authorised contractor to a licensed facility.	
Operational and Maintenance			
No significant impacts are predicted.			
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative noise impacts associated with MetroLink and other developments. Regarding MetroLink, the potential for overlap of projects at the new substation sites, in such circumstances giving rise to a slight adverse impact. Similarly, other construction projects occurring at the same time are predicted to give to rise to temporary slight adverse impacts.			

10.15.8. Assessment

10.15.9. In view of the subterranean nature of the project and the primarily urbanised landscape through which the route alignment runs, there is potential for strikes on existing utilities during construction. The applicant states that thorough investigations will be undertaken to identify and reconfirm the location of all utility infrastructure within the works areas. Service interruptions, where necessary, will be localised and temporary in duration.

10.15.10. I note from the assessment that the applicant has undertaken a desktop assessment and states that identification of utility services has been based on publicly available datasets and mapping and consultations with utility providers. Section 16.3.1 of the EIAR identifies the companies consulted and Table 16.1 summarises known utilities along each of the cable route sections.

10.15.11. The EIAR outlines that works will be diverted around or below the utility and if there is a need to divert the utility this will be coordinated with the utility provider and on the basis of an agreed methodology. Interactions such as this are commonplace for projects such as this and I am satisfied that the applicant's approach will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact on utilities during construction.

10.15.12. Regarding waste management, the applicant states that waste will be managed in accordance with the Waste Management Hierarchy and Guidance on Waste Acceptance Criteria at Authorised Soil Recovery Facilities (EPA. 2020) and the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended and associated Regulations. For projects such as this a substantial proportion of the excavated material will be reused as backfill, with the result that waste arisings requiring disposal will be reduced. I am satisfied that the applicant's approach will be effective in ensuring there is no significant impact in respect of waste management during construction.

10.15.13. I agree that there will be no significant impact in respect of utility usage during construction and I agree that there will be no significant impacts during operation.

10.15.14. Cumulative Impacts

10.15.15. In respect of MetroLink, the assessment predicts that impacts will be localised and slight, in the absence of mitigation.

10.15.16. In respect of utilities, a survey programme accompanied the Railway Order application and the applicant, TII, stated that a scheme of designs for utility diversions has been agreed with relevant utility providers. In this instance, the applicant has adopted a similar approach and I am satisfied that it will be effective in ensuring there is no cumulative impact during construction.

10.15.17. In respect of waste management, I note that assessment only gives rise to potential impacts at the point of interface and whilst this is appropriate in respect of other environmental factors, I do not consider it is appropriate in respect of waste management.

10.15.18. MetroLink will give rise to very significant quantities of arisings during construction and TII's overarching waste management strategy seeks to minimise the amount of material that requires landfill disposal. However, it is nevertheless predicted to have a residual significant impact on national landfill capacity. The proposed cables development will, by comparison to MetroLink, give rise to a very minor level of arisings and will at worst have a very minor impact on landfill capacity. But they will contribute to the cumulative requirement for landfill disposal from the project. Taking a very precautionary approach to the issue, I consider there is likely to be a **significant cumulative adverse** impact on national landfill capacity. I would reiterate, though, that the cables development is a very limited component of the overall impact.

10.15.19. In respect of other developments, I agree that the development is unlikely to give rise to material assets impacts above the level of slight. Mitigation measures are incorporated that I am satisfied will be effective in addressing potential impacts from the development and will also ensure there is no likelihood of significant cumulative impacts.

10.15.20. Conclusion

10.15.21. Subject to specified exceptions below, I am satisfied that the potential for significant adverse impacts can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, the proposed mitigation measures and through suitable conditions.

10.15.22. Arising from my assessment, I consider there is a likelihood of significant adverse impacts as follows:

- Cumulative adverse impacts on national landfill capacity arising from the disposal of excavated materials, when the cables project is considered in tandem with the MetroLink Railway Order development.

10.15.23. I am satisfied that additional practical mitigation is not available, which would have the effect of reducing the identified impact below the 'significant' level.

10.15.24. In view of the primarily subterranean nature of both projects, which requires very substantial excavation for multiple aspects of construction, the generation of large amounts of spoil that requires disposal is unavoidable. It is my opinion that the long-term benefits of the project outweigh the identified impact and that it does not justify a refusal of the application.

10.16. Roads and Traffic

10.16.1. Introduction and Methodology

10.16.2. The potential for significant impacts in respect of Roads and Traffic is addressed at Chapter 17 of the EIAR. The assessment is stated to have been carried out in accordance with relevant guidance and included both desktop assessment and field surveys. Consultations are stated to have taken place with each of FCC, DCC and the Dublin Airport Authority.

10.16.3. A workplace travel plan is not considered necessary for the construction phase, due to the low number of workers and the dispersed nature of the worksites.

10.16.4. Section 17.1 states that in accordance with TII guidance, a full traffic and transport assessment is not warranted for the operational phase given the negligible level of traffic that will be generated. Accordingly, potential impacts during operation have been scoped out.

10.16.5. Receiving Environment

10.16.6. The study area encompasses both urban and rural areas and the majority of routes are considered to be not sensitive. A small number of routes are considered to be sensitive, as are summarised in Table 17.6. These areas include schools,

housing, commercial properties and sports facilities. Table 17.14 summarises road capacities and existing traffic data along these routes.

10.16.7. Table 17.11 summarises the local road network in the area, identifying a mix of two-way single lane carriageways and dual carriageways and with speed limits ranging between 25km/h to 80km/h. Table 17.12 summarises local bus routes and their interactions with the cable route and Table 17.13 summarises local walking and cycling infrastructure.

10.16.8. Potential Impacts

10.16.9. Table 12 below summarises the Roads & Traffic assessment contained within the EIAR.

Roads & Traffic	Potential Impacts in the absence of Mitigation	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Impact
Construction			
Traffic Increases	Stockhole Lane between the R132 and L2055 and Harristown Lane are predicted to experience traffic and HGV traffic increases. Whilst increases are significant in terms of traffic assessment, they are not considered to be significant for EIA purposes.	- A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be developed and implemented, to optimise the efficiency and safety of all traffic activities generated by the Proposed Development - Site access/egress will be from the public road network	No significant residual impacts predicted.
Driver Delays	Driver delays on affected road sections are predicted to be not significant.		
Road Safety	There is no significant increase in traffic for most roads and road/lane closures will be managed. Road safety impacts are predicted to be not significant		
Community Effects	In view of predicted traffic flows, impacts on pedestrian amenity are predicted to be not significant.		
	Cycling and walking infrastructure will be impacted at a number of locations, with the impact classified as minor. The predicted impact is not significant.		
Operational and Maintenance			
Operational phase impacts are scoped out.			
Decommissioning			
It is not intended to decommission the proposed development.			
Cumulative Impacts			
Consideration is given to cumulative noise impacts associated with MetroLink and a number of other developments. In each instance, predicted impacts are not significant.			

10.16.10. Assessment

10.16.11. Predicted potential impacts arise during construction only and are stated to relate to driver delay, road safety and community effects and each potential impact is stated to have the potential to arise due to the presence of increased traffic on haul routes.

10.16.12. I note that, on the basis of a quantitative assessment of traffic increases along the alignment, the assessment predicts that 2 No. road sections are predicted to experience 'moderate significant effects' or 'major significant impacts', however; the assessment also clearly states the predicted impacts do not equate to 'significant' in terms of the EIAR guidelines. The roads in question are: -

- L2753 Stockhole Lane between R132 Swords Road & L2055 Baskin Lane, and
- L3151 Harristown Lane

10.16.13. The L2055 Baskin Lane will be closed to through traffic for a period during construction. Section 17.5.6.1 of the EIAR states that it will be subject to a rolling closure for a period unlikely to exceed eight weeks during the Civil works and will be open to local and emergency access.

10.16.14. By reference to Table 17.23 of the EIAR, in the case of the L2753 Stockhole Lane between R132 Swords Road & L2055 Baskin Lane the identified impact relates to an increase of HGV traffic. In the case of the L3151 Harristown Lane the identified impact relates to an increase in both general traffic and HGV traffic. Subject to implementation of proposed mitigation, which comprises the preparation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), the applicant predicts that there will be no significant roads and traffic impacts during construction.

10.16.15. Road capacities and existing traffic data are set out in Table 17.14 of the EIAR, where it can be seen that peak traffic levels (4pm-5pm) are substantially below the theoretical road capacity. Construction is estimated to generate an average of 52-84 HGV movements per day and I agree with the EIAR that the issue to be considered is driver delays. And whilst there is inevitably going to be a level of disruption caused by road works and the presence construction plant/vehicles and operatives during construction, I agree that subject to implementation of a scheme CTMP there will be no significant roads and traffic impacts during construction. This

approach is established practice and the applicant commits to agreement of temporary traffic management measures with both planning authorities.

10.16.16. I agree that there are no likely significant impacts during the operational phase.

10.16.17. Cumulative Impacts

10.16.18. The EIAR assessment gives consideration to potential cumulative impacts with other development proposals in the immediate environs, as presented in Table 17.26 of the EIAR. The vast majority of other developments are 'scoped out' but a small number are 'scoped in'. These projects relate to developments at Dublin Airport (night-time use of the runway system), Greater Dublin Drainage, MetroLink and an industrial development at Harristown. By reference to Table 17.27 of the EIAR, no significant cumulative impacts are predicted.

10.16.19. The developments are predicted to give rise to none or minor increases in 'all traffic' and HGV traffic on each of the assessed routes. I have commented on the likely effectiveness of the project CTMP in mitigating the limited impact of the proposed development and I am satisfied that this approach will be effective in ensuring there is no cumulative significant impact. I would also point out that both the Greater Dublin Drainage Project and MetroLink will themselves involve the implementation of scheme CTMP, which will be developed and implemented in consultation with both planning authorities.

10.16.20. Conclusion

10.16.21. Having regard to the foregoing, I conclude that significant Roads and Traffic impacts on during construction and operation are unlikely.

10.17. Interactions

10.17.1. Introduction

10.17.2. Chapter 19 of the EIAR addresses interactions between environmental factors. Table 19.1 of the EIAR presents a matrix of potential interactions and key interactions are subjected to detailed assessment at Table 19.2.

10.17.3. Interactions

- 10.17.4. The potential interactions identified in the EIAR can be summarised as follows:
- 10.17.5. **Population and Human Health** interactions with: Air, Climate, Noise & Vibration, Surface Water & Flooding, The Landscape, Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage, Roads and Traffic Transport, Land, Soils & Hydrogeology: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.6. **Air** interactions with Climate, Biodiversity, Roads and Traffic: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.7. **Climate** interactions with: Surface Water & Flooding, Biodiversity, Roads and Traffic: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.8. **Land, Soils & Hydrogeology** interactions with: Surface Water and Flood Risk, Biodiversity, The Landscape, Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.9. **Surface Water & Flooding** interactions with: Biodiversity, Roads and Traffic: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.10. **Biodiversity** interactions with: Noise & Vibration: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.11. **Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage** interactions with: Material Assets: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.12. **Roads and Traffic** interactions with: Noise & Vibration, Material Assets: No significant impacts predicted.
- 10.17.13. Assessment
- 10.17.14. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, and the characteristics of the receiving environment, I consider that there is potential for interactions between the various environmental factors. Having reviewed the information provided by the applicant, I consider the EIAR has adequately identified the main potential interactions between the various environmental factors and I further consider the conclusions regarding potential interactions is robust.
- 10.17.15. Most of the potential interactions identified have been addressed elsewhere in my assessment under the individual environmental factor, for example interactions

between population and human health and noise, and I do not foresee any likelihood of the predicted interactions giving rise to significant additional impacts on the environment.

10.17.16. Conclusion

10.17.17. I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed the issue of interactions between environmental factors in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Directive and the 2001 Act. I am satisfied that there are no such additional effects, beyond those identified under the various environmental.

10.18. **Reasoned Conclusion**

10.18.1. Having regard to the examination of environmental information contained above, and in particular to the EIAR and supplementary information provided by the applicant, and the submissions from the planning authorities, prescribed bodies and observers in the course of the application, including submissions made to the oral hearing, it is considered that the main significant adverse impacts of the proposed development on the environment with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures are as follows:

- Biodiversity
 - Cumulative impacts arising from permanent loss of Local Importance (Higher Value) habitat, when considered alongside the consented MetroLink development (ABP-314724-22) and other developments in the vicinity.
- Material Assets
 - Cumulative adverse impacts on national landfill capacity arising from the disposal of excavated materials, when the cables project is considered in tandem with the MetroLink Railway Order development.

10.18.2. In both of the above instances, the predicted significant impact is in the cumulative context, when considered alongside the wider MetroLink project. MetroLink is one of the largest infrastructure projects in the history of the State and I consider that it is not possible to construct a metro line in an existing urban/suburban area without negative impacts during the construction stage, due to the nature of the

works and the necessary proximity to sensitive receptors. I consider the long-term benefits of the development outweigh the identified significant cumulative impacts.

11.0 Appropriate Assessment

11.1. Introduction

11.1.1. The requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive as related to Appropriate Assessment of a project under part XAB, sections 177U and 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- Screening the need for Appropriate Assessment.
- Appropriate Assessment of implications of the proposed development on the integrity of those European sites where likely significant effects are identified or could not be excluded.

11.2. Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment Update Report

11.2.1. The application is supported by an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement and an Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement, each of which was prepared by Mott MacDonald consultants. The Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement was submitted as part of a Further Information response, where a number of issues were identified with the original submission document. For the avoidance of doubt, I have given consideration to Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement as part of my report.

11.2.2. The Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report considers potential significant impacts arising from the proposed development on Baldoyle Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Malahide Estuary SAC, Howth Head SAC, Ireland's Eye SAC, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, Rogerstown Estuary SAC, Lambay Island SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA, North-West Irish Sea SPA,

Malahide Estuary SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA and Lambay Island SPA. The screening assessment is stated to have been undertaken using a source-pathway-receptor approach based on desktop and field survey data. European sites identified as having source-pathway-receptor connectivity to the subject site were subjected to examination in order to determine the potential for significant effects.

11.2.3. The Natura Impact Statement considers potential significant impacts arising from the proposed development on a number of the above-mentioned sites.

11.3. Submissions by Prescribed Bodies and Observers

11.3.1. Submissions were received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (the Department) and Inland Fisheries Ireland. No submission raises any particular concern regarding appropriate assessment.

11.4. Adequacy of Information Provided by the Applicant

11.4.1. Having reviewed the application documents, additional submissions and third-party and prescribed body observations received, I am satisfied that there is adequate information in relation to the proposed development and European sites to allow for a complete examination and identification of any potential significant effects of the development, alone, or in combination with other plans and projects on European sites.

11.5. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

11.5.1. The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of any European site and is, therefore, subject to the provisions of Article 6(3).

11.5.2. The Screening Report identifies source-pathway-receptor connectivity to 6 No. European sites within the zone of influence, each off the Dublin coast, and concludes that the potential for significant effects cannot be ruled out, in view of sites' conservation objectives, and that Appropriate Assessment and associated Natura

Impact Statement are required. The Screening Assessment is summarised in Table 13 below.

Potential Impact Factors and European Sites	
Potential Impact Factors	European sites within the Zone of Influence
Habitat degradation caused by pollution/contamination of receiving waterbodies	Yes Baldoye Bay SAC (Site Code 0199), North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 0206), Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 0205), Baldoye Bay SPA (Site Code 4016), North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 4006), Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code 4025)
Habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species	Yes Baldoye Bay SAC (Site Code 0199), North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 0206), Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 0205)
Disturbance of ex-situ populations of SCI outside of a European site boundary	Yes Baldoye Bay SPA (Site Code 4016), North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 4006), Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code 4025)

- 11.5.3. I would bring to the Commission's attention that there are a number of technical issues with both the original and updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement documents, related to sites screened for potential significant effects and those taken forward to the Natura Impact Statement. At the Further Information stage, the applicant was requested to clarify and update the assessment in respect of identified issues, however; having considered the updated document provided a number of ongoing issues remain, as follows.
- 11.5.4. The screening assessment (as presented above) identifies potential for significant effects in respect of (a) habitat degradation caused by pollution/contamination of receiving waterbodies at 6 No. European sites, (b) habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species at 3 No. European sites and (c) disturbance of ex-situ populations of SCI outside of a European site boundary at 3 No. European sites. The NIS considers each of the 6 No. identified European sites in respect of (a) but considers additional sites in respect of (b) and (c). These additional sites are primarily the same as those considered in respect of (a) but additionally includes Rogerstown Estuary SPA, which was screened out at the Screening stage.
- 11.5.5. For completeness, I have considered each of the relevant European sites and relevant impact factors presented in Table 13, as they relate to Screening, and as can be seen in the following sections, I am of the opinion that certain of the identified impact factors can be excluded at this point. Where an impact factor is screened out, I have not engaged with the issue further and, notwithstanding its inclusion within the NIS assessment, I have not included it further in my report.

11.6. Screening Determination

- 11.6.1. Having regard to the information presented in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, the nature, size and location of the proposed development and its likely direct, indirect and cumulative effects, the source pathway receptor principle and sensitivities of the ecological receptors, I concur with the applicant's screening determination that there is potential for significant effects on the following European sites:

- Baldoye Bay SAC (Site Code 000199), North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 0206), Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 0205), Baldoye Bay SPA (Site Code 4016),

North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 4006) and Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code 4025).

11.6.2. From the information provided, it is reasonable to conclude that there is potential for significant effects to arise from: -

- (a) habitat degradation caused by pollution / contamination of receiving waterbodies,
- (b) habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species and

11.6.3. Regarding the issue of disturbance of Ex Situ species associated with North Bull Island SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA and Malahide Estuary SPA, I consider there is no real likelihood of significant effects. Each of these sites is in excess of 2.5km of the cable route and the environment through which the cable route runs is urban and there is an existing high level of human activity, including a noisy airport environment. Ex situ species present in the area are likely to be habituated to high levels of human activities and associated noise. The issue can be excluded at this stage.

11.6.4. Similar commentary applies to Rogerstown Estuary SPA, which although screened out by the applicant's assessment but which is considered as part of the NIS. This SPA is a considerable distance from the cable route. Ex situ species present in the area are likely to be habituated to high levels of human activities and associated noise. The issue can therefore be excluded at this stage.

11.6.5. As screening is considered at pre-assessment stage, further analysis is required to determine the significance of such impacts and if appropriate, where any potential impacts are identified on the qualifying interests associated with Natura 2000 sites, to apply any mitigation measures to exclude adverse effects. In view of the high degree of interconnection between sites in this area, taking a precautionary approach, I consider it reasonable that each of the above-mentioned European sites are brought forward for inclusion in the Appropriate Assessment.

11.7. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

11.7.1. The following is a summary of the scientific assessment of the implications of the project on the site integrity of the European sites using the best scientific knowledge

in the field. All aspects of the project which could result in significant effects on qualifying interest features of the European Sites are assessed and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects are considered and assessed.

11.7.2. I have relied on the following guidance:

- DoEHLG (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, National Parks and Wildlife Service. Dublin
- EC (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- EC (2021) Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC.

11.7.3. Relevant European Sites

11.7.4. The relevant European sites for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2 AA) are:

- Baldoyle Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Malahide Estuary SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA and Malahide Estuary SPA.

11.7.5. This appropriate assessment will consider whether or not the project would adversely affect the integrity of these European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects in view of the site's conservation objectives.

11.7.6. The following tables summarise the Updated NIS site-by-site assessment of potential significant effects and proposed mitigation and also present a summary of my assessment. I expand on specific issues in subsequent sections.

Table 14: AA Summary Matrix for Baldoyle Bay SAC (Site Code 000199)			
SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area and community distribution	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters. The impact is considered unlikely to be significant and are assessed on a precautionary basis.	• Concrete ○ No on-site batching will take place. ○ Quick setting mixes will be used. ○ Trucks will be washed down in a sealed area prior to site entry ○ Any required in-stream concrete pours will be in an isolated, dry works area. The ECW will undertake water monitoring. Any required pumping will be stopped during the pour. ○ Concrete works will be scheduled for dry weather and covers will be provided, to prevent wash off from fresh concrete. ○ Waste concrete will be disposed of to a licensed operator. ○ Spills will be notified to NPWS/IFI and the employer's team. • Silt Control ○ Measures including silt fences and silt traps will be implemented and subject to monitoring. ○ Access routes will include a setback from watercourses
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition	PFAS appears to be present in groundwater close to the construction area and may be encountered during construction. Predicted impacts are likely to be imperceptible. The potential spread of Japanese knotweed has potential to cause habitat degradation.	

Atlantic salt meadows	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		• Full invasive species surveys will be undertaken pre-construction. • Invasive species stands will be marked and restricted and will include a 4m buffer. • Machinery will be steam cleaned prior to site entry/exit. • Necessary derogation licences will be secured. • PFAS ○ Risks will be managed in accordance with the MetroLink PFAS Management Strategy for Dublin Airport. ○ In-stream works will not take place if PFAS is detected and an alternative crossing method will be used. Any in-stream works will take place in dry conditions. ○ Soils and water removed will be tested for PFAS and such materials will be stored at the TMMC. Upstream and downstream monitoring of PFAS levels will also take place • An outline CEMP will be implemented, which includes mitigation contained within the NIS. • An Ecological Clerk of Works will be appointed to oversee mitigation implementation. • An Environmental Clerk of Works/Environmental Engineer may be appointed, as necessary.
Mediterranean salt meadows	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Overall conclusion: Integrity Test The applicant determined that the mitigation measures proposed will ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives. Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Baldoyle Bay SAC.			

Table 15: AA Summary Matrix for North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 000206)			
SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area; community extent; community structure; and community distribution	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters. The impact is considered unlikely to be significant and are assessed on a precautionary basis. PFAS appears to be present in groundwater close to the construction area and may be encountered during construction. Predicted impacts are likely to be imperceptible. The potential spread of Japanese knotweed has potential to cause habitat degradation.	As above
Annual vegetation of drift lines	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Atlantic salt meadows	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Mediterranean salt meadows	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		

Embryonic shifting dunes	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i>	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Humid dune slacks	To restore favourable conservation condition in relation to habitat area/distribution; physical structure; and vegetation structure / composition		
Petalwort	To maintain favourable conservation condition in relation to population distribution / size; suitable habitat area; hydrological conditions; and vegetation structure		
Overall conclusion: Integrity Test			
The applicant determined that the mitigation measures proposed will ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives.			

Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for North Dublin Bay SAC.

Table 16: AA Summary Matrix for Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 000205)

SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters. The impact is considered unlikely to be significant and are assessed on a precautionary basis. PFAS appears to be present in groundwater close to the construction area and may be encountered during construction. Predicted impacts are likely to be imperceptible. The potential spread of Japanese knotweed has potential to cause habitat degradation.	As above
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand		
Atlantic salt meadows	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows		
Mediterranean salt meadows	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows		
Shifting dunes along the shoreline with	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i>		

Ammophila arenaria			
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation		
Overall conclusion: Integrity Test The applicant determined that the mitigation measures proposed will ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the site in light of its conservation objectives. Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Malahide Estuary SAC.			

Table 17: AA Summary Matrix for Balydoyle Bay SPA (Site Code 004016)			
SCI/QI: Brent Goose, Shelduck, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Wetland and Waterbirds.			
SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Wetlands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Baldoye Bay SPA	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters and may give rise to habitat degradation.	No specific mitigation proposed. Mitigation outlined above for the protection of water quality is good practice for each of the SPA sites.
Overall conclusion: Integrity Test			

The applicant determined that there is no potential for adverse effects on site integrity.

Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Baldoyle Bay SPA.

Table 18: AA Summary Matrix for North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 004006)

SCI/QI: Brent Goose, Shelduck, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, black-tailed godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Wetlands

SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Wetlands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in North Bull Island SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters and may give rise to habitat degradation.	As above.

Overall conclusion: Integrity Test

The applicant determined that there is no potential for adverse effects on site integrity.

Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for North Bull Island SPA.

Table 19: AA Summary Matrix for Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code 004025)

SCI/QI: Great Crested Grebe, Brent Goose, Shelduck, Pintail, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank and Wetlands

SCI/QI	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
Wetlands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Malahide Estuary SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it	Pollutants may be transferred to the European site via surface waters and may give rise to habitat degradation.	As above.
Overall conclusion: Integrity Test The applicant determined that there is no potential for adverse effects on site integrity. Having considered the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Malahide Estuary SPA.			

11.7.7. Assessment of Potential Significant Effects

11.7.8. As I have outlined, the potential for adverse effects on the site integrity of the European sites relates to habitat degradation caused by pollution/contamination of receiving waterbodies, or habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species. These issues are discussed separately below.

11.7.9. Habitat degradation caused by pollution/contamination of receiving waterbodies

11.7.10. The applicant outlines that the cable route interacts with 6 No. watercourses: the Maybe River, Santry River, Dunbro Stream, Barberstown Stream, Sluice River and the Cuckoo Stream. Each of these watercourses ultimately discharges into Dublin Bay and the complex of European sites contained therein. Each of these European sites is located in coastal or estuarine waters and habitat types present in each site is robust to pollutant or contaminant content within surface waters. It would therefore take a substantial contamination/pollution event in order to affect the integrity of these sites.

11.7.11. The applicant proposes a suite of mitigation measures that includes measures I consider to be standard for construction projects of this nature, including silt control measures. Having considered proposed mitigation measures, I am satisfied that they are implementable and will be effective in their stated aims. I would also highlight to the Commission that an Ecologist will be employed to oversee the proposed works.

11.7.12. The possibility of encountering PFAS in the area of Dublin Airport is an issue that arose following submission of the application (it was first raised at the MetroLink oral hearing in March 2024). At the F.I. stage the applicant was requested to submit additional information that addresses the potential for encountering PFAS substances in surface waters, groundwater and soils at Dublin Airport and its environs.

11.7.13. The applicant's response is contained in both the updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement and in the document PFAS Strategy for HV Cables, which contains a detailed assessment of likely interactions. It should be noted that the updated NIS, in identifying the potential for encountering PFAS, does not identify how it may be transferred to a European site or how it may affect site integrity.

- 11.7.14. Regarding surface waters, the document PFAS Strategy for HV Cables identifies that the Mayne River, Santry River, Sluice River and Cuckoo Stream have detected PFAS. In response it is proposed that each of these surface waterbodies will be crossed without using in-water techniques i.e. use of existing cable ducts or HDD methodology. This will avoid any need for pumped dewatering, that might spread PFAS into uncontaminated areas and will avoid any direct transfer of PFAS-contaminated water from the development.
- 11.7.15. Regarding the possibility of encountering PFAS in groundwater, I consider the issue relates to mobilisation of PFAS within the groundwater and subsequent discharge into surface waters that may themselves discharge into a European site. The extent of likely dewatering likely to be required as part of the development is unstated, but the applicant submits that the likelihood of encountering PFAS in these circumstances is very low, in view of the mainly shallow depth of excavation required.
- 11.7.16. The primary locations where PFAS may be encountered are identified as the HDD launch sites at Stockhole Lane and the M1 crossing. The document PFAS Strategy for HV Cables points out that bentonite will be used as part of HDD works, to restrict groundwater ingress, and that a continuous duct will be placed in the drilled hole through which the cable will later be pulled.
- 11.7.17. In view of the separation distance between the HDD launch sites and any European site, I am satisfied that the risk of significant effects on a European site arising from this aspect of the project is very low. Further, the applicant's approach is standard for construction projects of this nature and will be effective in minimising the rate of water ingress associated with HDD works.
- 11.7.18. Habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species
- 11.7.19. The issue of the potential spread of invasive species relates to the spread of Japanese knotweed and the NIS points out that there is potential for establishment on terrestrial habitats within affected European sites. Appendix B of the updated NIS identifies that this species was encountered at a number of locations along the cable route. The majority of the identified locations are distant from surface waters and are

also distant from a European site, so the risk of spread is low, however; at least 1 of the surveyed locations (near Belcamp substation) is proximate to the Mayne River and there is a potential risk of spread. I also acknowledge that there is a risk of further invasive species stands developing in the period before construction commences.

11.7.20. The applicant commits to undertaking further targeted surveys prior to the commencement of works and that stands encountered will be accordingly marked and avoided, unless under the supervision of the ECoW. They further outline that any requirement to excavate or dispose of invasive species will be done under the supervision of the ECoW and subject to necessary consents. I am satisfied that this approach, which is standard practice for dealing with invasive species, will be effective in ensuring there is no significant effect on a European site.

11.7.21. **In-Combination Effects**

11.7.22. Potential in-combination effects are considered at Section 3.4 of the updated NIS.

11.7.23. Regarding plans, the assessment identifies that both the Dublin City Development Plan and Fingal County Development Plan were themselves subject to appropriate assessment that objectively determined there would be no significant effect on a European site prior to adoption.

11.7.24. Regarding projects, the assessment identifies a number of proposed and consented developments but does not identify how in-combination effects may arise. The assessment concludes that there is no potential for significant in-combination effects with any of the identified projects.

11.7.25. I consider the potential for in-combination effects with other plans and projects relates to the same impact factors, i.e. habitat degradation caused by pollution/contamination of receiving waterbodies and habitat degradation caused by introduction/spread of non-native invasive species.

11.7.26. The proposed development is located in an urban context, where there is already a high degree of development and an extensive surface water drainage network in place. QI Habitats within downstream European sites are also located in

estuarine/coastal waters and are thus robust to pollutant/contaminant content within surface waters. Considering the range of mitigation measures included as part of the proposed development, which I consider to be standard for a project of this nature I am satisfied that the proposed development will not act in combination with other plans and/or projects, to have a significant effect on downstream water quality such as would give rise to significant effect(s) on the integrity of any European sites.

11.7.27. In respect of the potential for introducing or spreading invasive species to a European site, I am satisfied that the applicant's proposed approach is adequate to ensure that the project will not give rise to the introduction or spread of invasive species and there will thus be no in combination effect.

11.7.28. **Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test**

11.7.29. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development had the potential to result in significant effects on Baldoyle Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Malahide Estuary SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA and Malahide Estuary SPA and that Appropriate Assessment was required, in view of the conservation objectives of those sites.

11.7.30. Following a detailed examination and evaluation of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement and Updated Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement and all associated material submitted with the application as relevant to the Appropriate Assessment process, I am satisfied that based on the design of the proposed development, combined with the proposed mitigation measures, adverse effects on the integrity of these European sites can be excluded with confidence in view of the conservation objectives of each site.

11.7.31. My conclusion is based on the following:

- A detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed development that could result in significant effects or adverse effects on European Sites within a zone of influence of the development site.
- Consideration of the conservation objectives and conservation status of qualifying interest species and habitats.

- A full assessment of risks to SCI bird species and QI habitats and species, for which the European sites are designated.
- Application of mitigation measures designed to avoid adverse effects on site integrity and likely effectiveness of same.
- The proposed development would not undermine the favourable conservation condition of any qualifying interest feature or delay the attainment of favourable conservation condition for any species or habitat qualifying interest for these European sites.

12.0 Recommendation

Having regard to the foregoing, I recommend that permission for the proposed development be granted, subject to conditions, for the following reasons and considerations as outlined in the Draft Order below.

DRAFT ORDER

13.0 Reasons and Considerations

The Commission performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in a manner consistent with Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, (consistent with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024, the National Adaptation Framework; Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland June 2024 and the relevant sectoral adaptation plans in particular the Electricity and Gas Sectoral Plan 2019 and in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State), and otherwise had regard to:

- European, national, regional and local planning, energy, climate and other policy of relevance, including in particular the following:
- European Policy/Legislation including:

- Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU (Environmental Impact Assessment Directive);
- Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive);
- Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive)
- National Policy and Guidance including:
 - Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (“NPF”), First Revision of the NPF;
 - National Development Plan 2021-2030
 - The objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030;
 - Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply (November 2021);
 - National Energy Security Framework (April 2022);
 - National Energy and Climate Action Plan (2021-2030);
- Regional and Local Planning Policy, including in particular:
 - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region 2019-2031;
 - Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028;
 - Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029
- The location, nature, scale and layout of the proposed development;
- The range of mitigation measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
- The range of mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement;
- The submissions received in relation to the application by all participants.
- The Inspector’s report and recommendation.

Appropriate Assessment

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report, that the proposed development may give rise to significant effects at Baldoyle Bay SAC (Site Code 0199), North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 0206), Malahide Estuary SAC (Site Code 0205), Baldoyle Bay SPA (Site Code 4016), North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 4006) and Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code 4025).

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Commission completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for Baldoyle Bay SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Malahide Estuary SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, North Bull Island SPA and Malahide Estuary SPA, in view of each sites' Conservation Objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment. In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

- i. The likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- ii. The mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and
- iii. The conservation objectives for the European Sites.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed on the aforementioned European sites, having regard to the site's conservation status. In overall conclusion, the Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Board completed an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development taking into account:

- (i) The nature, scale and extent of the proposed development;
- (ii) The Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted in support of the application;
- (iii) The submissions made in the course of the application and at the oral hearing; and
- (iv) The Inspector's report.

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment. The Board agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the application. The Board considered, and agreed with the Inspector's reasoned conclusions, that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures are as follows:

- **Biodiversity**
 - Cumulative impacts arising from permanent loss of Local Importance (Higher Value) habitat, when considered alongside the consented MetroLink development (ABP-314724-22) and other developments in the vicinity.
- **Material Assets**
 - Cumulative adverse impacts on national landfill capacity arising from the disposal of excavated materials, when the cables project is considered in tandem with the MetroLink Railway Order development.

The Board completed an Environmental Impact Assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the effects on the environment of the proposed development, by itself and in combination with other development in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, the Board adopted the report and conclusions of the Inspector.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would accord with national, regional and local planning policy and is acceptable in respect of its likely effects on the environment and its likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

14.0 CONDITIONS

1.	The proposed scheme shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Reason: In the interest of clarity.
2.	All of the mitigation measures, environmental commitments and monitoring measures identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) shall be implemented in full, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Reason: In the interest of clarity and the protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the development.
3.	The applicant shall submit and agree with Fingal County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland a method statement for the proposed crossing of the M1 motorway and the crossing of the proposed east-west distributor

	road. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with such agreement. Reason: In the interest of road safety and to protect the national road network.
4.	Prior to commencement of development the applicant shall submit and agree with Fingal County Council a strategy for encountering and addressing potentially contaminated land at Castlemoate House Historic Landfill and Belcamp Lane Historic Landfill. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with such agreement. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.
5	(a) Prior to commencement of development the applicant shall submit to Fingal County Council a strategy for the protection of Protected Structures that are adjacent to the cable route and which shall include measures for protection of and remediation of any damage caused by construction. (b) The strategy shall include proposals for the protection of the Protected Structure historic milestone (RPS. No. 462) that is contained within a wall at the entrance to Lime Hill House, Malahide Road/R107. Reason: In the interest of the protection of architectural and cultural heritage.
6.	Prior to the commencement of development the applicant shall undertake pre-construction condition surveys of historic bridge Nos. CH008 (in the townland of Turnapin Little) and CH201 (in the townland of Belcamp) and submit same to Fingal County Council. These condition surveys shall inform the requirement for any additional mitigation measures, to be determined by the project archaeologist in consultation with the National Monuments Service. Reason: In the interest of the protection of architectural and cultural heritage.
7.	Prior to the commencement of development the applicant shall prepare and submit for agreement method statements for all water crossings to the local authorities and Inland Fisheries Ireland. Construction shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with such approval.

	Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and in order to protect water quality within receiving surface waters.
8.	Prior to the commencement of development the applicant shall engage with the Dublin Airport Authority and AirNav Ireland in order to satisfy aviation related safeguarding requirements. The development shall thereafter be carried out with any such agreement. Reason: In order to protect aviation safety.
9.	The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise, vibration and dust management measures, protection of groundwaters, emergency planning, traffic management, protection of wayleaves, protection of archaeological and cultural heritage items and off-site disposal of construction / demolition waste. Reason: In the interest of public safety and residential amenity.
10.	Drainage arrangements shall comply with the requirements of the planning authorities for such works in respect of both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and public health.
11.	Construction shall accord with advice contained with Inland Fisheries Ireland guidance document 'Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters' (2016). Additional drawings and/or construction method statements outlining compliance with the IFI Guidelines shall be submitted to Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council, as appropriate, for agreement. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and in order to protect water quality within receiving surface waters.

12.	The developer shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist or other professional to oversee all site clearance works, topsoil stripping and groundworks associated with the development. Prior to the commencement of such works the archaeologist shall consult with and forward to the local authorities or the National Monuments Service, as appropriate, a method statement for written agreement. Should archaeological remains be identified during the course of archaeological monitoring, all works shall cease in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the planning authority, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, regarding appropriate mitigation. A final archaeological report shall be provided following the completion of archaeological work on site, describing the results of archaeological monitoring and investigate work/excavation required. Reason: To ensure the continued preservation of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.
13.	Construction waste shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Waste Management Plan, which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authorities prior to commencement of development. This plan shall be prepared in accordance with the “Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects”, published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in July 2006 and shall include details of the methods and locations to be employed for the prevention, minimisation, recovery and disposal of this material in accordance with the provision of the Waste Management Plan for the Region in which the site is situated. Reason: In the interest of sustainable waste management
14.	Construction works shall be carried out such a manner as to ensure that the adjoining roads are kept clear of debris, soil and other material and cleaning works shall be carried on the adjoining public roads by the developer and at the developer’s expense on a daily basis.

	Reason: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.
15.	A landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, prior to commencement of development. This scheme shall include proposals for the replacement or remediation of trees/hedgerows removed or damaged by construction. Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and visual amenity.
16.	Prior to the commencement of development, protective fencing in accordance with best practice shall be installed to protect all trees and hedgerows identified to be retained. The fencing shall be installed in such a manner as to provide protection to the root protection zone and it shall be retained on site until all construction works are completed. No soil, spoil, construction material or waste will be stored or tipped within the fenced off area and no construction plant or vehicles will be parked within the spread of trees/hedgerows identified to be retained. The fencing shall be retained until such time as works are completed. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.
17.	Within a period of 6 months before the commencement of development, the applicant shall undertake a further baseline otter survey. The survey shall be undertaken by an Ecologist who is appropriately qualified and experienced in undertaking such surveys and in line with best practice. The results of the pre-construction survey and any proposed mitigation measures shall be submitted for the written approval of the planning authorities prior to the commencement of works. Reason: In the interest of the protection of biodiversity.
18.	Within a period of 6 months before the commencement of development, the applicant shall undertake a survey of the cable route alignment for Alien Invasive Species (IAS) designated under the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (2011). A verification report shall be submitted to the planning authority prior to commencement of construction. Should any IAS be found, an IAS

	Management Plan shall be prepared and submitted to the planning authorities. Implementation of any IAS Management Plan shall be monitored by the project ecologist in agreement with the planning authorities. No works are to take place until actions of an IAS Management Plan are completed. Reason: In the interest of environmental protection
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I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

Barry O'Donnell

Senior Planning Inspector

29th May 2026.