



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

### ABP-318914-24

<b>Development</b>	110kV substation and 110kV underground grid connection
<b>Location</b>	in the townland of Great Island, Kilmokea, County Wexford. (kilmokeagreatislandsubstation.ie)
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Wexford County Council
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Kilmannock Battery Storage Limited
<b>Type of Application</b>	Application under the provision of 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)
<b>Observer(s)</b>	Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
<b>Inspector</b>	Una O'Neill

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1. An application has been made by Kilmannock Battery Storage Limited under the provisions of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), for the development of a 110kV electrical substation, underground grid connection (UGC) and other infrastructure site works and drainage, in the townland of Great Island, Kilmokea, Co. Wexford.
- 1.2. Pre-application consultations were held between the applicant and the Board as required under Section 182E of the Act (ABP Ref. ABP-318011-23) in relation to a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), 110kV substation and 110kV Underground Grid Connection to existing Great Island Eirgrid Substation and all associated site works. On the 18th of December 2023 the Board decided that the proposal for a 110kV substation and UGC is strategic infrastructure and falls within the scope of Section 182A of the Act, and therefore any application for approval must be made directly to the Board under Section 182A(1) of the Act. The Board determined that the BESS does not fall within the scope of S182A and as such a planning application should be made in the first instance to Wexford County Council for that element.
- 1.3. A separate application was submitted and granted by Wexford County Council on 21st March 2024 (Planning Application Reg. Ref. 20231294) for a development to the north of the site comprising a 38kV substation, battery energy storage system (BESS) and 38kV underground cabling connection to an existing 38kV substation at Campile on the distribution system.
- 1.4. It is stated in the submitted documentation that the proposed infrastructure subject of this application would allow electricity from a battery energy storage system to be supplied to the transmission system, i.e. the National Grid 'the Grid', during times of fluctuation on the grid, thereby enabling a reduction in Irelands carbon emissions, an increase in national energy security, and promotion of sustainable use of renewable resources.

## 2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The application site, with a stated area of 2.58ha, is located at Great Island, Kilmokea, approx. 12.5km south of New Ross Town, in southwest County Wexford.
- 2.2. The site is located to the immediate east/northeast of the major energy facility of Great Island Power Station and shares its southern boundary with the Greenlink UK-Ireland Interconnector site (currently under construction/nearing completion). Vehicular access to the site is via a private road off the L4033 (entrance road to the Great Island Power Station) which will be shared with the Greenlink Interconnector station. The former Waterford to Rosslare/Wexford railway link runs parallel to the north of the site. To the east are agricultural lands.
- 2.3. The SEE Great Island Power Station is a gas-fired station opened in 2015; there is also an older power station (now shut down) which dates from the 1960s; and large heavy fuel oil tanks on the site. There is an Eirgrid substation to the north of the power station, which is partly screened by vegetation and topography. The Great Island Power Station is an establishment which holds an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) licence and to which the Major Accident Regulations apply. The overall facility including the two tall unused concrete chimneys are significant structures that are visible over a wide area. In the vicinity of the power station are a number of 110 kV and 220 kV electricity lines with pylons.
- 2.4. The application site is currently greenfield in nature and slopes from south to north, with the highest point to the southwest (22m Above Sea Level/ASL) and the lowest point to the northeast (5m ASL). The site is made up of rough grassland and is open on its eastern and northern boundary, being part of a larger field; the site is bounded by Greenlink Interconnector convertor station on the southern boundary; and access to the site is from the western boundary. To the north (within the same field) Wexford County Council has recently permitted a Battery Energy Storage system and associated 38kV substation and UGC. To the east (within the same field) the area has been identified as an area for future battery storage development. The wider surrounding area, outside the Great Island Power Station, is predominantly rural in nature and defined by an agricultural character and coastal location. The site is located proximate to the confluence of the River Suir and River Barrow, which forms the boundary between Wexford, Waterford and Kilkenny. The nearest area of

settlement is Cheekpoint in Co. Waterford, approx. 1.5km southwest of the site (as the crow flies), on the opposite side of the River Barrow/River Suir, with the Great Island Power Station prominent in the view from Cheekpoint. Campile village is approx. 3km to the east (as the crow flies).

- 2.5. The River Barrow, Lower River Suir, and the neighbouring estuary are designated as SACs. The Barrow River Estuary is a pNHA. The River Barrow, River Suir and Campile River are located c.124m, c.1.2km and c.977m beyond the western, southwestern and southern site boundaries respectively (from the closest point of the UGC). The nearest watercourse to the application is the Newtown Stream (EPA Ref. Newtown 14), approx. 230m east of the site boundary at the nearest point.

### **3.0 Proposed Development**

- 3.1. The proposed development comprises the construction of a 110kV substation with two substation buildings and a connection to the national grid via an underground grid connection (UGC) from the proposed installation to an existing 110kV Eirgrid substation at the SSE Energy Great Island Power Station.

- 3.2. The installation consists of:

- A 110kV tail-fed substation and underground grid connection measuring approximately 838m in overall length. The UGC runs parallel to the railway line to the north before turning in a southerly direction and connecting with Great Island 110kV substation.
- The 110kV substation would consist of a 110kV transformer; house transformer; disconnect, individual current and voltage transformers, combined current/voltage transformer, surge arrestors; circuit breakers and cable sealing end; a blastwall measuring 8.00m in overall height;
- 4no. lightning masts measuring 18m in overall height;
- Palisade fencing measuring 2.6m in overall height;
- Pole-mounted security cameras and lamp posts.
- An Eirgrid substation building with an overall footprint of approximately 180sqm and overall height of 4.2m would be located at the western end of the substation

area. An IPP substation with an overall footprint of 132sqm and height of overall 4.2m would be located at the eastern end.

- The typical UGC installation would consist of standard ESB ducting details of the following: 1no. trench (0.82m wide; 1.31m deep) measuring approximately 838m in overall length to carry 3no. 160mm power ducts and 2 no. communication ducts and an ECC duct, connecting the proposed substation to an existing 110kV Eirgrid substation at Great Island.
- The typical trefoil trench will need to be adapted to a flat formation to accommodate for any service crossings encountered along the route. A typical width of trench for a flat formation trench would be approx. 1.60m with varying depths.
- A temporary construction compound would be constructed within the site boundary for construction phase of the development, after which it would be removed.

3.3. The application is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Planning Drawings – Appendix I
- Planning Statement – prepared by Entrust Limited – See Appendix II
- Archaeology & Cultural Heritage – prepared by Courtney-Deery See Appendix III
- Screening Report for EIA – prepared by Entrust Limited – See Appendix IV
- Ecology (AA Screening; EclA) – prepared by Moore Associates Ltd. - See Appendix V
- Flood Risk Assessment – prepared by IE Consulting Ltd. - See Appendix VI
- Environmental Noise Assessment – prepared by PDA Acoustics Ltd. - See Appendix VII
- Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – prepared by Entrust Ltd. - See Appendix VIII
- Landscaping Plan – prepared by Cathal O' Meara Ltd. - See Appendix IX
- CEMP – prepared by IE Consulting Ltd. - See Appendix XI
- Transport Management Plan – prepared by Local Transport Solutions Ltd. – See Appendix XII

- Air Quality Report and Climate Report – prepared by AWN Consulting Ltd. - See Appendix XIII
- Population and Human Health – prepared by AWN Consulting Ltd. - See Appendix XIV
- COMAH (Seveso 2022 Site Screening) Report – prepared by AWN Consulting Ltd. - See Appendix XV
- Site Specific Soils and Geology Report (including ground investigation report) – prepared by Ciaran Reilly Associates – See Appendix XVI

## 4.0 Planning History

The most recent planning history relevant to the site and the neighbouring sites is summarised hereunder and expanded upon in detail of the applicant's submitted planning report, appendix 1.

**ABP-318011-23** – Pre-application consultation. The Board deemed that the proposed development would form a node on the transmission network and therefore constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development as defined under and in associated legislation, i.e. Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999. Development consisting of a battery energy storage system (BESS) has been considered by the Board to not form part of SID, therefore subject to a different consent regime.

**PA Reg Ref. 20180506:** Permission granted in 2018, for grid system services facility comprising one TSO compound including 1 no. single storey TSO electrical substation building and 1 no. single storey customer substation, electrical inverter/transformer station modules, containerised battery storage modules on concrete support structures, heating, ventilation and air conditioning units (hvac units), access tracks and upgraded site entrance, associated electrical cabling and ducting, security gates, perimeter fencing, cctv, landscaping works and all associated ancillary infrastructure on hand.



NOTE: Permitted development was of a similar but smaller scale to that now proposed. Permission has expired and development was not constructed.

**Application Granted to Immediate north of site for linked application of a battery energy storage system (BESS):**

**PA Reg Ref 20231294:** Permission GRANTED for Battery Energy Storage System (application included EIA Screening Report and AA Screening Report) on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024 -

Construction of an electrical infrastructure installation and associated underground grid connection (UGC) on lands within the townland of Great Island measuring approximately 2.6Ha. in overall area. The installation will consist of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a 38kV tail-fed substation, underground grid connection (UGC) to connect the proposed substation to an existing ESB substation at Campile and associated ancillary development.

**Permitted Application to east/south of application site:**

**ABP-308906-20** – Permission GRANTED in June 2021 for Greenlink Ireland Onshore – the Irish onshore elements of a transboundary electricity interconnector to connect Great Island 220 kV substation in County Wexford and National Grid's Pembroke transmission substation in Pembrokeshire (Wales). Development comprises: a new converter station, tail station, MV substation and 23km of high voltage direct current (JVDC) electricity cables, 420m of high voltage alternating current (HVAC) cables, 23.42km of fibre optic cable and all associated site works with an overall proposed development site area of 83.8ha.

The elements of the Greenlink Interconnector which are offshore in Ireland, offshore in Wales and on land in Wales are subject of separate consents.

**Concurrent applications to west of site:**

**ABP-318103-23 (PA reg ref 20221633)** – Permission sought for the development of a new 38kV electricity circuit c.13.75 km in length (c.12 km of overhead line (OHL) and c.1.75 km of underground cable (UGC)), between the existing Knockmullen ESB Substation in New Ross and the existing Great Island ESB Substation, within the Great Island generation station complex.

Permission is sought for all associated works including temporary works such as the creation of access ways etc. Planning permission is sought for a ten (10) year period. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared and will be submitted to the planning authority with the application.

NOTE: WCC granted permission.

**ABP-318204-23 (PA reg ref 20230871)** – Permission sought for development consisting of:

- A 10 year planning permission for the construction of a Grid Stability Service Development and all associated site clearance and site development works.
- The proposed grid stability service development consists of the provision of a synchronous condenser within a building circa 13 metres in height; elevated modular containers to house electrical and control equipment and all associated plant/apparatus including: a) a generator circuit breaker, b) transformers, c) outdoor cooler equipment, d) underground cabling (including a connection to the existing substation, e) all associated above ground cabling, piping and electrical connections, f) 1 no. generator and associated diesel tank, g) firewater tank and pumphouse, h) perimeter fencing and 2 no. gates and i) all associated site development works including hardstanding, drainage, gabion wall and landscaping.
- The proposed site clearance works include the removal of a temporary portacabin and construction rubble from the site.
- The application relates to an establishment which holds an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) license and to which the major accident regulations apply.

NOTE: WCC granted permission.

## 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1. National Policy Context

#### **Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (Climate Act, 2021)**

- 5.1.1. The Climate Act 2021 commits Ireland to a legally binding 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. As part of its functions the Board must, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner that is consistent with the most recent approved climate action plan, most recent approved national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework, sectoral plans, furtherance of the national climate objective and the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.
- 5.1.2. The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 23) follows the commitment in the Climate Act, 2021 and sets out the range of emissions reductions required for each sector to achieve the committed to targets. CAP 23 supports the acceleration of the delivery of renewable energy onto the national grid with a target of achieving 80% of electricity demand being met from renewable energy by 2030. To this end CAP 23 sets a target of providing 8GW from solar energy by 2030 and 9GW from onshore wind energy by 2030.

#### **National Planning Framework (NPF)**

- 5.1.3. The NPF is a high-level strategic plan to shape the future growth and development of the country to 2040. It is focused on delivering 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).
- 5.1.4. NSO 8 focuses on the 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society' and recognises the need to harness both on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources including solar and deliver 40% of our electricity needs from renewable sources.
- 5.1.5. It is stated in the NPF that "new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy

sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand. It is a National Policy Objective (NPO 55) to 'promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050'.

### **Government Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply, November 2021**

- 5.1.6. The Policy Statement states that electricity is vital for the proper functioning of society and the economy and notes that in order to contribute to the achievement of greenhouse gas emission targets, the Government has committed that up to 80% of electricity consumption will come from renewable sources by 2030 on a pathway to net zero emissions. It states that ensuring continued security of electricity supply is considered a priority at national level and within the overarching EU policy framework in which the electricity market operates.
- 5.1.7. The challenges to ensuring security of electricity supply are stated to include:
- ensuring adequate electricity generation capacity, storage, grid infrastructure, interconnection and system services are put in place to meet demand – including at periods of peak demand; and
  - developing grid infrastructure and operating the electricity system in a safe and reliable manner;
- 5.1.8. The Policy Statement states that the Government recognises that:
- ensuring security of electricity supply continues to be a national priority as the electricity system decarbonises towards net zero emissions;
  - there is a need for very significant investment in additional flexible conventional electricity generation, electricity grid infrastructure, interconnection and storage in order to ensure security of electricity supply;
- 5.1.9. It states that the Government has approved that it is appropriate for additional electricity transmission and distribution grid infrastructure, electricity interconnection and electricity storage to be permitted and developed in order to support the growth of renewable energy and to support security of electricity supply.

## 5.2. Regional Policy Context

### **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region 2040**

The following Regional Policy Objectives are noted:

- RPO1: Environmental Assessment (a) Any reference to support for all plans, projects, activities and development in the RSES should be considered to refer to ‘environmentally sustainable development’ that has no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites and no net loss of biodiversity, that shall be subject to appropriate feasibility studies, best practice site/route selection (to consider environmental constraints such as landscape, cultural heritage, the protection of water quality, flood risks and biodiversity as a minimum), environmental assessment including EclA to support development management and where required, the completion of statutory SEA, EIA and AA processes as appropriate...
- RPO 87: relates to a low carbon energy future.
- RPO 90: addresses regional decarbonisation.
- RPO 96: to support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure ...to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.
- RPO 98: supports the development of a Regional Renewable Energy strategy.
- RPO 100: to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection.
- RPO 219: to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers.
- RPO 222: to support the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and to support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity networks and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects.

## 5.3. Local Policy Context

### **Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028**

#### Volume 1: Written Statement

Chapter 9 deals with Infrastructure Development:

**Objective PT01:** To facilitate the provision of and improvements to energy networks in principle, provided that it can be demonstrated that:

- The development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure.
- The route proposed has been identified with due consideration for social, environmental and cultural impacts.
- The design is such that will achieve least environmental impact consistent with not incurring excessive cost.
- Where impacts are inevitable mitigation features have been included.
- Proposals for energy infrastructure should be assessed in accordance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

**Objective PT02:** To support, subject to the objectives of this section and Volume 10 Energy Strategy, connecting infrastructure for the integration of low carbon and renewable energy generation projects including community scaled projects with power transmission infrastructure.

**Objective PT04:** To support the upgrade of existing and development of new electricity substations in locations that do not have a significant negative impact on nearby residents and are subject to landscaping screening.

#### Volume 10: Energy Strategy

Chapter 8 deals with supporting infrastructure:

**Objective ES35:** To facilitate the provision of and improvements to energy networks in principle, provided that it can be demonstrated that:

- The development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure
- The route proposed has been identified with due consideration for social, environmental and cultural impacts
- The design is such that will achieve least environmental impact consistent with not incurring excessive cost

- Where impacts are inevitable mitigation features have been included
- Proposals for energy infrastructure should be assessed in accordance with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive

**Objective ES37:** To facilitate the development of Battery Energy Storage Systems and other energy storage technologies such as air storage and synchronous condensers at appropriate locations to ensure a reliable and secure energy supply, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria, including residential and visual impacts.

#### 5.4. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is located proximate to the confluence of the River Suir and River Barrow. The following European sites are considered to be within the zone of influence of the site:

- Lower River Suir SAC (002137) – c. 1.1km at its closest point to the UGC element of the development; c. 1.7km from the main body of the site of the proposed development.
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162) – c. 148m west from the UGC and c. 705m west of main body of the site of the proposed development.

The Barrow River Estuary is a pNHA.

#### 5.5. EIA Screening

- 5.5.1. A Screening for EIA Report has been submitted with the application, which outlines that the proposed development does not meet or exceed the description or thresholds established by Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The Report includes for a screening assessment based on the criteria outlined in Schedule 7 and wherein it is concluded an EIAR is not warranted.
- 5.5.2. Notwithstanding that the applicant prepared and submitted a screening assessment based on the criteria of Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended, I note that an electrical substation and/or underground cabling is not a class of development contained in Parts 1 or 2 of Schedule 5 of the

Regulations which sets out the prescribed classes of development and thresholds that trigger a mandatory EIAR.

- 5.5.3. Class 10 Infrastructure Projects of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended includes for (dd) All private roads which would exceed 2000 metres in length. An existing permitted private access track is proposed to be utilised for construction and maintenance and part of the underground cabling route, therefore issues do not arise with this class of development.
- 5.5.4. I note Class 2 Agriculture, Silviculture and Aquaculture (a) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, relates to restructuring of rural landholdings and removal of field boundaries. No field boundaries are to be removed as part of the proposed development. I therefore do not consider that issues arise with this class of development.
- 5.5.5. As no element of the proposed development falls into a class of development contained in Schedule 5, Parts 1 or 2, I am satisfied that the proposed development does not therefore constitute sub-threshold development and neither a mandatory EIA, nor screening for EIA, is required.

## **6.0 Observations**

### **6.1. Planning Authority**

No report received from Wexford County Council.

### **6.2. Prescribed Bodies**

- 6.2.1. Two submissions were received from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- 6.2.2. The submission from TII is summarised as follows:
- Query of use of N25 as a port of entry.
  - Query in relation to proposed treatment of abnormal oversized loads.



- Note in relation to requirement for permits from LA where abnormal loads weights involved.
- Request for full assessment of all structures on national road network along the delivery route to confirm that all structures can accommodate the proposed loading.
- Any damage cause to national road shall be rectified.

6.2.3. The submission from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage relates to archaeology and is summarised as follows:

- Conditions recommended as part OPR Practice Note C3, C5, and C6, which relates to implementation of mitigation measures; requirement for pre-development archaeological testing and submission of an Archaeological Impact Assessment Report; CEMP to incorporate archaeological requirements; and a final archaeological report to be submitted to the planning authority and Department.

### 6.3. **Other Observers**

6.3.1. No third party observations were submitted.

### 6.4. **Applicant's Response to Submissions**

6.4.1. The applicant prepared a response to the submissions, the main points of which are summarised as follows:

- CEMP has been updated to include archaeological requirements.
- Other points raised in DAU submission on archaeology can be addressed by condition. It is noted that a archaeological licence application to carry out testing on the adjoining permitted BESS development has been recently granted.
- In relation to TII submission, an addendum letter to the previously submitted Transport Management Plan has been prepared by Local Transport Projects Ltd. "LTP" attached in Appendix 2. In summary, the port of entry for any abnormal loads has been identified as Rosslare Harbour. In relation to potential impacts upon the road network, the letter highlights that loads associated with the proposed development are predicated to be less than those associated with the approved adjacent Greenlink Interconnector facility (ABP Ref: 308906). It is therefore expected

that the same route from Rosslare Harbour would also be suitable for the proposed scheme in terms of the impact on structures along the route.

- It is noted that no concerns have ever been raised by Wexford County Council regarding traversing structures or routing along the proposed regional/national roads as part of this application.

## **7.0 Assessment**

### **7.1. Introduction**

7.1.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the application, having inspected the site, and having regard to relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the main issues in the planning assessment are as follows:

- Principle of Development and Planning Policy
- Residential Amenities – Noise, Air Quality and Climate
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Biodiversity
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Traffic and Transport
- Surface Water and Flood Risk
- Other Matters
- Appropriate Assessment

### **7.2. Principle of Development and Planning Policy**

7.2.1. The current application before the Board is made under the provisions of Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and relates to the provision of an electricity substation and underground grid connection. The development subject of this application forms parts of a wider application submitted under a separate consent process to Wexford County Council for a Battery Energy

Storage System (BESS), which has been permitted (planning ref 20231294) to the north of the site, with lands to the east identified for potential for future similar development. The BESS system is stated to be capable of storing a maximum of 263 GW of renewable electricity a year. The development subject of this application was outlined in the planning application approved by Wexford County Council for context purposes, as was the site to the east. It is stated that the development subject of this application would operate in conjunction with the BESS storage system.

- 7.2.2. The proposed 110kV substation compound proposed under this current application would be located on a 16m Above Sea Level (ASL) platform immediately south of the proposed 38kV substation compound and the battery energy storage system (BESS), as permitted under 20231294. The proposed UGC route would measure approximately 838m in overall length, running west from the proposed substation along an existing internal access road before turning south to Great Island Power Station and an existing 110kV substation located on these lands. The cabling route will require crossing ESB underground cable crossings and gas pipeline within land folio WX51685F; Uisce Eireann watermain crossings and in the vicinity of ESB infrastructure, namely 110kV pole sets and pylons (See Table 2 – Summary of 38kV Underground Cable Route – TLI Construction Methodology).
- 7.2.3. The importance of renewable energy is clearly acknowledged at a national, regional and local level and there are a suite of policy documents that support and promote the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. The National Planning Framework National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 8 focuses on the ‘Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society’ and includes National Policy Objective (NPO 55) to ‘promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050’, while the need for new energy systems and transmission grids are recognised.
- 7.2.4. In terms of the regional context, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for Southern Region has a strategic role in terms of energy assets in national energy generation and transmission. Objectives of the RSES support sustainable reinforcement and provision of new infrastructure to ensure that the energy needs of future population and expansions within designated growth areas can be delivered and that a safe, secure and reliable source of electricity is available to the region.

Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) 96, 100, 219 and 222 support the upgrading and provision of new energy infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and meet future energy needs.

- 7.2.5. At the level of the County Development Plan, objective ES35 supports the provision of and improvements to energy networks in principle, subject to demonstrating that the development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure and that the proposed route has been identified with due regard to impacts (social environmental and cultural). Where impacts are identified, mitigation features are to be considered and proposal should be assessment in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Elsewhere the plan sets out support for the renewable energy sector and Battery Energy Storage Systems, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria. I consider that the provisions of the development plan provide high level support for the type of infrastructure subject of this application.
- 7.2.6. The principle of a battery storage development has already been accepted and permitted under WCC planning reg. ref. 20231294. The principle of any development required to enable the permitted development should also be acceptable in principle.
- 7.2.7. Having regard to the above I am satisfied that the principle of the development of a 110kV electricity substation and associated grid connection comprising 110kV cabling is acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment under any other relevant criteria, as covered hereunder.

### **7.3. Residential Amenities – Noise, Air Quality and Climate**

- 7.3.1. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Noise Assessment, and Air Quality and Climate Assessment. I assess hereunder the potential impacts of this development in terms of noise, air and climate on residential amenities and consider separately in Section 7.5 hereunder potential visual impacts of the proposed development.

#### *Noise*

- 7.3.2. An Environmental Noise Assessment prepared by PDA Acoustics (See Appendix VII) has been submitted with the planning application. The assessment examines potential noise impacts related to this application on identified receptors surrounding

the application site both during the construction phase and operational phase of the proposed development, in association with the potential noise impact of the adjoining and linked development of a 38kV electrical infrastructure and BESS facility, recently granted permission by Wexford County Council, reg. ref. 20231294.

- 7.3.3. The main sources of operational noise are identified as the externally mounted plant associated with the substation, including the 110kV transporter, and the HVAC systems located externally to the battery units. A noise model has been run. Four noise sensitive receptors have been identified with the closest dwelling c. 480m to the northwest. Based on the results, no significant noise issues arise.
- 7.3.4. Construction noise impacts are also assessed. The closest noise sensitive receptor (dwelling) is c. 150m to the northwest of the proposed UGC works, at their closest point. No significant issues are identified, and a range of good practice measures are proposed, including communication with local residents.

#### *Air Quality*

- 7.3.5. The applicant has submitted an Air Quality Report, undertaken by Awn Consulting, dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2014, and addresses the 'Construction and operational stage assessment of air quality impacts'. Construction phase impacts relate to dust and traffic. Operational phase impacts relate to traffic. In terms of dust, no designated sites occur within 50m of the site boundary or 500m from site access roads, therefore no assessment of dust impacts to ecology was undertaken. A low risk of dust soiling impacts and human health impacts are predicted and best practice dust mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure there are no significant impacts at nearby sensitive receptors.
- 7.3.6. Construction traffic can cause emissions to air due to the increase in HGVs accessing the site. The construction stage traffic has been reviewed and a detailed air quality assessment has been scoped out against TII criteria, given the level of traffic anticipated. The construction stage traffic impact on air quality is rated to have an imperceptible, direct, neutral and short-term impact.
- 7.3.7. Operational traffic utilising the site will be low in numbers and no significant impacts in terms of air quality are identified in this regard.

- 7.3.8. Section 5 of the report proposed best practice mitigation measures to limit impacts on air quality. I consider these to be reasonable and acceptable. No significant cumulative impacts have been identified.
- 7.3.9. I consider the location of the proposed development will not have a significant negative impact on the residential amenities of the most proximate dwellings in terms of noise or air quality.

#### *Climate*

- 7.3.10. The application is accompanied by a report on Construction and Operational Stage Assessment of Climate Impacts by Awn Consulting, dated, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023. During the construction stage the main source of climate impacts will be as a result of GHG emissions and embodied carbon associated with the proposed construction materials and activities for the proposed development. During the operational phase, traffic accessing the site for maintenance purposes has the potential to impact on climate. In addition, the report considers the vulnerability of the proposed development in relation to future climate change during the operational phase.
- 7.3.11. The proposed development is providing storage for renewable energy, therefore it is considered that the impact of GHG emissions from the proposed project aligns with Ireland's GHG trajectory to net zero by 2050 as per TII Guidance (TII 2022). As per the assessment criteria in Table 3 of the submitted report, the impact of the proposed development in relation to GHG emissions is considered long-term and neutral. In relation to climate change vulnerability, it has been assessed that there are no significant risks to the proposed development as a result of climate change.

#### **7.4. Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 7.4.1. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), Photomontage Report, Landscaping Plan and Landscape Report.
- 7.4.2. As per the operative Wexford County Development Plan, the site is located within the Barrow River Valley LCU (Landscape Character Unit) and sits the wider study area to the east and north-east characterised by the Uplands LCU. The Barrow River Valley LCU is classified as having a moderate-high sensitivity, therefore applications for development in these areas must therefore demonstrate an awareness of these inherent limitations by having a very high standard of site selection, siting layout,

selection of materials and finishes. Development in these areas which is likely to have an individual or cumulative visual impact on the landscape will only be permitted where the applicant has demonstrated an overriding need for the development, including transport and energy infrastructure, in the proposed location.

- 7.4.3. Policy Objective PT04 of the operative development plan seeks 'To support the upgrade of existing and development of new electricity substations in locations that do not have a significant negative impact on nearby residents and are subject to landscaping screening'.
- 7.4.4. The site is located in rural area, defined immediately to the west by the Great Island Power Station, an existing industrial appearance; to the immediate east by a recently permitted BESS development, with which this proposal is associated; and to the south by interconnector infrastructure currently under construction. The land to the east is rural in character. There are existing trees and woodlands in the wider vicinity to the south and southwest, which screen elements of the existing power station.
- 7.4.5. The highest point on the site is the southwest, from where there are extensive views to the east and northeast. The views to the west and south are curtailed by existing infrastructure associated with the power station. Flat fields of pasture and crop, formerly wet land now reclaimed, extend to the east. On the southern side of the railway the scrub has been cut back, leaving an area of disturbed ground and brambles. There are two buildings proposed to be constructed as part of the development. The building on the western side of the site, the Eirgrid substation building, has an overall footprint of approximately 180sqm and overall height of 4.2m. To the east of the site, the IPP substation has an overall footprint of 132sqm and height of overall 4.2m. To the south of the site, the permitted and recently constructed Greenlink converter building is significantly larger in scale, being 123m long, 21m high and 53m wide at its widest point.
- 7.4.6. The LVIA sets out the methodology adopted. The assessment is based on a 5km radial study area, widened to the north to 6km to incorporate Slieve Coillte which is a distinctive landscape feature in the area being the highest point on the Hook Peninsula. The zone of theoretical visibility extends to 3km to aid in the assessment of impacts on landscape. The landscape setting of nearby National Monuments, Recorded Archaeological Sites and Monuments, and Protected Structures are also

considered, including Dunbrody Abbey National Monument and Kilmannock House and Walled Garden. Recreational routes and roads are also considered in the landscape impact assessment. Nine viewpoints (see Table 6 of the LVIA report) have been selected to undertake an assessment of landscape and visual effects.

- 7.4.7. Construction effects, direct and indirect, are rated as negligible and not significant, with no loss of notable landscape features.
- 7.4.8. Table 7 of the submitted LVIA sets out viewpoint assessment findings, with the magnitude of effect on the nine viewpoints rated between 'very small', 'small', to 'none to very small', with the effect and significance ratings being all 'not significant'.
- 7.4.9. Table 8 sets out an appraisal of the wider landscape and visual effects on the landscape character units of Barrow River Valley LCU and Uplands SCU, with the magnitude of effect rated as very small and none to very small respectively, and the effect and significance rated as not significant in both cases. The development is also assessed against other sensitivities, with overall effect and significance of all ranging between none and not significant.
- 7.4.10. In terms of cumulative visual impacts, the Greenlink convertor building is referenced and it is noted that this building (south of the application site) is larger in scale and height than the substation proposed. It is noted that the permitted Battery Energy Storage System will be seen in conjunction with this development and the magnitude of the impact is considered to be limited. Overall, no significant effects are predicted and the magnitude of cumulative landscape and visual effect is rated as minor and not significant.
- 7.4.11. In terms of proposed landscaping as a mitigation measure, native woodland is proposed beyond the eastern boundary, as well as native hedgerow in front of the palisade fencing that runs along the engineered slope on the northern and eastern boundaries, permitted under 20231294. I consider this proposal acceptable in terms of mitigating any visual impact.
- 7.4.12. Having regard to my inspection of the site and surrounding area, and taking account of the scale, height and layout of the proposed substation on lands that immediately adjoining an existing electricity development of a long standing local industrial nature with its associated chimney stacks, pylons and other infrastructure; context of the proposed Greenlink Interconnector building; the distance from the development to



roads, dwellings and recreational routes; the screening as proposed under the landscape plan; along with the undergrounding of the transmission lines, I am satisfied that the proposed substation and associated transmission infrastructure would not have an adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area.

## **7.5. Biodiversity**

- 7.5.1. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was prepared by Moore Group Environmental Services and a Bird and Bat Report was prepared by Eire Ecology (I refer the Board to Appendix V). The area of the EclA covers the area subject of this application and that of the adjoining site to the north and east (lands to the north relating to the recently permission for a BESS by Wexford County Council, 20231294).
- 7.5.2. The EclA sets out the methodology applied, which includes a combination of desk top studies using recognised ecological data bases, and field surveys. Site surveys include a habitat survey (27<sup>th</sup> July 2023), and observations for mammals such as badgers and otters. Bird surveys were undertaken (July and October 2023) using three vantage point surveys and also a breeding bird transect was conducted (26<sup>th</sup> July 2023) within the site and the adjacent co-development. Vantage point surveys were conducted from the railway track to the north, within a 500m buffer around the site, which is stated was not ideal however it presented the best available location given the context and works to the south. I am satisfied that this limitation has not detracted significantly from the results of the survey work.
- 7.5.3. A preliminary walkover survey was undertaken to assess the level of bat activity and suitability for bat roosts on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, with two static bat detectors placed within the site between 13<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 7.5.4. A Screening for Appropriate Assessment was also conducted and submitted with the application. This is assessed separately under Section 8 hereunder.

### *Baseline Receiving Environment*

- 7.5.5. The habitats recorded include Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) and a thin strip of Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3) along the northern boundary adjoining the railway line. The field slopes from north to south toward the railway line. To compensate for the sloping nature of the site, the area will be levelled (cut) and filled

to provide a platform to build upon. In terms of the UGC, this is proposed to be placed under the existing access road to the Greenlink development. When it exits this road, it travels south through the edge of mixed broadleaved woodland and gorse scrub (WD1) and into rank grassland. No invasive species were recorded. The overall habitat is rated of low ecological value. The loss of improved grassland and recolonising bare ground is rated as imperceptible, permanent. The loss of woodland/scrub as part of the UGC is rated as imperceptible, permanent.

- 7.5.6. There are no surface water streams on site and no direct pathways to offsite surface water bodies. The nearest watercourse is the Newtown Stream (EPA Ref. Newtown 14), approx. 230m east of the site boundary at the nearest point. The River Barrow and River Suir are approx. 124m and 1.2km respectively to the west, where they confluence, and the Campile River (which also confluent with the River Suir), which is approx. 977m to the south.
- 7.5.7. No otter habitats, badgers or badger setts, were discovered in the study area.
- 7.5.8. With regard to bats, the highest bat activity was recorded on the meter adjacent to the northern hedgerow boundary. Bats recorded were Common Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat, and Soprano Pipistrelle, with lower numbers of Brown long-eared bat, 40kHz Pipistrelle and Myotis species. The EcIA determined that there is low potential for bat habitats, with the scrub and hedgerow to the north of the site of relatively low value to foraging bats and the site is of low potential for bat commuting on site. No likely significant effects at a local level are predicted with regard to direct or indirect effects.
- 7.5.9. With regard to birds, it is stated in the submitted Bird and Bat report that breeding and wintering bird surveys were conducted from July to October 2023. Table 5-4 of the submitted EcIA sets out the guidance consulted for the surveys.
- 7.5.10. Breeding birds were recorded via transect survey on 26th July 2023. Other birds recorded on the site from the VPS include buzzard, herring gull, meadow pipit, sparrowhawk and yellowhammer, with more species identified within the 500m buffer. It is noted that blackheaded gull and herring gull were recorded overflying the site, but were not recorded feeding or perching there and the site is considered of low value for breeding gulls. The site is also considered of low ecological value for birds and bats, bar the meadow pipit and yellowhammer, noting however that are

higher value lands in the wider area. It is noted that better habitat to the north of the site includes mature treelines and hedges bordering tillage grain fields. Hinterland surveys further revealed species of interest to the south by the estuary.

- 7.5.11. As assessment of impacts was undertaken having regard to Percival, 2003. Table 6.4 of the Bird and Bat Report rates potential impact on species of interest, namely buzzard, brown long eared bat, common pipistrelle, meadow pipit, leisler's bar, myotis species, sparrowhawk, soprano pipistrelle, and yellowhammer. No likely significant effects at a local level are predicted in terms of direct and indirect effects, namely habitat loss and displacement/barrier effect. The site is stated not to be suitable for wintering bird species given the quality of the habitat present, and barriers including the railway bank to the north, treeline to the east and construction site to the south. No ex-situ effects from SPAs and SACs in the wider area are recorded or predicted.
- 7.5.12. Cumulative Impacts were considered having regard to developments permitted/proposed in the area. No in-combination or cumulative effects were identified in the submitted EclA. I agree with the conclusion that no significant in-combination impacts arise in relation to biodiversity, have regard to surveys undertaken and results and the existing context of the site.
- 7.5.13. Mitigation Measures are considered not to be required given no significant impacts identified, however, standard site-specific measures with regard to bats and birds are proposed, which I note are not proposed for the purpose of protecting European sites or associated SPIs but as best practice measures. A list of measures related to bats and birds are set out in Section 6.1 and Section 6.2 of the EclA.
- 7.5.14. No residual impacts have been identified.
- 7.5.15. I have reviewed the submitted information and undertaken a site inspection. I note the low ecological value of the site and the lack of suitable habitat on the site for wintering birds, in addition to the survey results submitted. I note the context of the site to the east and south and I consider the level of assessment in this instance to be reasonable. I am satisfied that the ecological impact of the proposed development is acceptable and will not have a negative impact on overall biodiversity, subject to condition and implementation of best practice construction methodologies as submitted with the application.

## **7.6. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**

- 7.6.1. A submission from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage refers to archaeology and recommends conditions in relation to testing, monitoring and reporting.
- 7.6.2. The application documentation is accompanied by a report titled Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage, by Courtney Deery, dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The methodology is set out, with all relevant guidance considered, and a desktop research and field inspection were undertaken.
- 7.6.3. There are no national or recorded monuments within or adjacent to the proposed development site. The closest national monument is Dunbrody Abbey (National Monument Number 192 and WX039-030001), a Cistercian house located just over 1.6km to the east of the proposed development. It sits on low-lying land, on a spur of land overlooking the River Campile. There are no RPS or NIAH sites located within the proposed development site or immediately adjacent to it. The closest structure on the RPS is Kilmokea House (RPS ref. WCC0882), c. 1.5km to the north of the application site. The Barrow Bridge (NIAH 12404401 (Kilkenny), 15703910 (Wexford)) located to the west of the existing energy plant is considered to be of national importance and has been identified as an important component of the built heritage of south County Wexford and Kilkenny on account of the connections with the development of the Fishguard and Rosslare Railway (FRR). The bridge was erected c. 1902-1906 and is a Pratt-type lattice girder "swing span" construction, which was in operation with passenger traffic until 2010. There are three structures listed on the NIAH Building Survey located over 1km from the proposed development, namely Kilmannock House and Gardens, Kilmannock House, and Graveyard in Kilmokea. No undesignated sites of cultural heritage interest were identified.
- 7.6.4. Lands immediately south of the site were assessed for archaeology as part of the construction of the existing Greenlink Interconnector facility (currently near completion), further to a condition that was attached to that permission. Geophysical survey followed by archaeological testing revealed no archaeological material or sites. Archaeological monitoring was previously carried out for the access road, where the grid connection is proposed, and no archaeological material was identified

along that road. The remainder of the grid connection route has been previously disturbed with the development of the Great Island Power Station site.

- 7.6.5. An archaeological visual assessment was conducted to and from Dunbrody Abbey, a national monument located approx. 1.6km east of the proposed development. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment concluded that the location, and operation of the proposed development would not detract in a significant manner from the setting, experience and views from the abbey. This is supported in the archaeological report submitted.
- 7.6.6. The report recommends a programme of archaeological testing be undertaken across the footprint of the proposed development in advance of construction, to detect any subsurface archaeological features, deposits and or material. This is recommended also as a condition in the submission from the Department.
- 7.6.7. The report also recommends that archaeological monitoring is undertaken, during site enabling and construction works that involve excavation and topsoil stripping. This will ensure that if any subsurface features of an archaeological nature are revealed, they will be identified and recorded. This recommendation is supported by the Department in their submission.

## **7.7. Traffic and Transport**

- 7.7.1. The application is accompanied by a Transport Management Plan (Appendix XII) and a Construction Environmental Management Plan. It is noted in the submission that the Traffic Management Plan submitted with this application is largely similar to the management plan for the adjoining permitted BESS site, the main difference is stated to be the requirement to deliver abnormal loads for the 110kV substation for this application. The temporary construction compound serving this and the adjoining site is located within the development site boundary of this application, which will be accessed off the existing 6m wide permitted private access road to the northwest of the site, which links into the L4033 and the R733. The private access road currently also serves the Greenlink Interconnector Facility to the south of the site. It was stated in the application for the BESS that the Interconnector site is c. 90% complete. A co-ordination programme is proposed as a mitigation measure to ensure no conflict with the use of the private access road, noting there is likely to be little

overlap given the interconnector facility is largely complete. I note no objection has been submitted from the Greenlink Interconnector Project and it is stated that there is an agreement between the parties.

- 7.7.2. In response to issues raised by TII, the applicant has submitted an addendum to the Transport Management Plan (appendix 2 of submitted response, dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024) to address queries raised.
- 7.7.3. With regard to operation impacts, the proposed facility will generate a small number of trips to/from the site for maintenance purposes, the impact of which is considered to be negligible.
- 7.7.4. With regard to construction impacts, materials will be moved to and from the site using heavy commercial vehicles (HCVs), in addition to smaller vehicles related to skip delivery, and commercial vans of workers. Deliveries to and from the site will be via the N25 – R733 – L4033 – private site access. It is noted that the access route to the BESS was considered as part of the Greenlink Interconnector development in the cumulative impact section of the EIAR associated with that application, including site access and visibility considerations and capacity. I note the volume of trips to be generated by the development is not quantified but it is stated in the Transport Management Plan that it is anticipated it will be low and reference is made to the BESS facility to the east which is considered to be similar. While the figures for construction traffic are not provided, I note that the Planning Authority has raised no issues with the level of traffic to be generated by the development. I note the scale of construction traffic for the BESS facility was estimated at 20 two-way HCV movements per day over a period of 20 weeks. I further note the scale of the Interconnector facility is greater than this proposal and given its near completion, any road capacity utilised by that development will be freed up.
- 7.7.5. Having regard to the existing road network and assessment of the adjoining development on the road capacity, which took into account this development, I do not anticipate that construction traffic for this scale of project, which is for a relatively short period of time, will be so great as to warrant a refusal. Traffic Management measures are set out in Section 5 of the submitted Transport Management Plan, which I consider reasonable and in accordance with best practice.

- 7.7.6. With regard to issues raised by TII, the applicant confirms that the port of entry for any abnormal loads has been identified as Rosslare Harbour, with the proposed development to have loads less than those associated with the approved adjacent Greenlink Interconnector facility (ABP Ref: 308906), which utilised the same route from Rosslare Harbour, therefore it is not anticipated that the proposed scheme will negatively impact structures along the route.
- 7.7.7. The applicant confirms that consultation took place with Wexford County Council in relation to the proposed construction routing for electrical infrastructure development at Great Island, Kilmokea (including existing and proposed developments) and no concerns regarding traversing structures or routing along the proposed regional/national roads were raised.

## **7.8. Surface Water and Flood Risk**

- 7.8.1. The proposed drainage layout plan is indicated on sheet drwg no 0591-DR-705, indicating two proposed surface water soakpits. During the construction phase the CEMP establishes standard construction measures to be implemented. Section 6.2.8 addresses soil, surface waters and groundwaters during construction. A Surface Water Management Plan is to be developed to manage the site drainage system. No discharge of effluent or groundwater or surface water will occur during construction. All wastewater is to be stored and removed off site for disposal and treatment.
- 7.8.2. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted. Potential flood risk could arise in the event of an extreme fluvial and/or tidal/coastal flood event in the River Barrow Estuary and/or the River Suir Estuary and/or the Campile River located c.91m, c.1.7km and c.955m beyond the western, western and southern boundaries of the UGC part of the site respectively and/or to an extreme fluvial flood event in the Newtown Stream located beyond the eastern boundary of the site.
- 7.8.3. The OPW PFRA flood mapping indicates that the site does not fall within an indicative fluvial, coastal, pluvial or groundwater flood zone, while to the east of the site an indicative fluvial and coastal flood zone area is mapped. The OPW Flood Info website identifies recurring flood events recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development site, with the site partially shown as falling within an area designated as 'Land Commission Benefited Lands.

- 7.8.4. No historical or recurring flooding events, including groundwater flooding, have been recorded within or in the vicinity of the proposed development site.
- 7.8.5. CFRAM Dataset Flood Extents were consulted and no issues arise for the site in terms of predicted coastal/tidal flood levels.
- 7.8.6. The OPW National Coastal Flood Hazard Mapping (NCFHM) are based on the results of detailed hydraulic modelling undertaken along the River Barrow Estuary and River Suir Estuary and provide a reasonably accurate delineation of flood zones and prediction of extreme flood levels at the location of the site of the proposed development. No issues have been identified in relation to the site.
- 7.8.7. As per the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines, DOEHLG, the site of the proposed development falls within Flood Zone 'C', therefore there is no requirement for The Justification Test.
- 7.8.8. I am satisfied that potential for flooding of the lands has been examined in sufficient detail and no significant risks exist and I am satisfied that the proposed development will not impact in this regard on adjoining areas.

## **7.9. Other Matters**

### *SEVESO*

- 7.9.1. A COMAH Seveso Screening Report has been submitted with the application. The site is within 300m of a SEVESO site, the Great Island Power Station, therefore consultation with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is required and was undertaken by the applicant.
- 7.9.2. The HSA confirmed that the proposed development is a type to which the proposed COMAH Regulations 2005 do not apply, being an installation, which does not involve the storage handling or processing of dangerous substances. The adjoining BESS was also considered by the HSA as not coming within the COMAH Regulations 2015, with no cumulative impacts arising.

### *Development Contribution*

- 7.9.3. The Planning Authority did not make a submission to the Board, therefore we do not have their views in respect of development contributions that may be payable. I note that power transmission is subject to development contributions where it relates to



pylon structures. The Development Contribution Scheme states that 'Development charges will be exempt on any technical telecommunications infrastructure, both mobile and broadband (e.g. masts, substations, power connections and security fencing)'. I do not consider this development to be telecommunications infrastructure. I propose that a development contribution, as per the existing scheme, should therefore be attached.

## **8.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening**

### **8.1. Compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive**

- 8.1.1. The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to screening the need for appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section.

### **8.2. Background and Description of the Application**

- 8.2.1. The subject site, with a stated area of 2.58ha, is located at Great Island, Kilmokea, approx. 12.5km south of New Ross Town, in southwest County Wexford. The site is located proximate to the confluence of the River Suir and River Barrow. The Lower River Suir SAC (002137) is c. 1.1km to the west of the site at its closest point to the UGC element of the development and c. 1.7km from the main body of the site where the substation is proposed. The River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162) is c. 91m west from the UGC and c. 700m west of the proposed substation.
- 8.2.2. The proposed development comprises the construction of a 110kV tailfed electrical substation (including inter alia two substation buildings) and associated underground grid connection (UGC) measuring approximately 838m in overall length, connecting to an existing Eirgrid 110kV substation at the SEE Great Island Power Station. The application documentation includes an EclA, Bird and Bat Report, Flood Risk Assessment, Soils and Geology Report, and CEMP. The development site is described in Sections 2, 3 and 7 of this report.
- 8.2.3. I note the habitats recorded include Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1), with a section of mixed broadleaved woodland and gorse scrub (WD1) and into rank grassland for the latter section of the UGC route where it comes off the private road.

There are no streams or surface water bodies on the site, with the nearest stream being the Newtown Stream, approx. 230m east of the site boundary at the nearest point (no direct connection to this stream from the site), with this stream connecting c. 1.25km downstream to the River Barrow, which is designated an SAC (River Barrow and River Nore SAC, 002162).

8.2.4. The applicant has submitted a screening report for Appropriate Assessment as part of the planning application, titled Report for the Purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening by Moore Group Environmental Services, dated 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The applicant's Stage 1 AA Screening Report was prepared in line with current best practice guidance and provides a description of the proposed development and identifies European Sites within a possible zone of influence of the development.

8.2.5. The applicants AA Screening Report concluded that 'There is no connectivity to the River Barrow, or to any European sites within or outside the potential Zone of Influence. There are no predicted effects on any European sites given:

- The distance from European Sites;
- The lack of direct connectivity and any hydrological pathways;
- There are no predicted emissions to air, water or the environment during the construction or operational phases that would result in significant effects.

8.2.6. Having reviewed the documents and submissions, I am satisfied that the information allows 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.

### **8.3. Potential Impact Mechanisms from the Project**

8.3.1. The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site and therefore it needs to be determined if the development is likely to have significant effects on any European sites.

8.3.2. The proposed development is examined in relation to any possible interaction with European sites, i.e. designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) to assess whether it may give rise to significant effects on any European Site.

8.3.3. Taking account of the characteristics of the proposed development in terms of its location and the scale of works, the following issues are considered for examination in terms of implications for likely significant effects on European sites:

- Surface water or groundwater pollution or contamination from silt, chemicals, oils, hydrocarbons, etc. during construction;
- Surface water or groundwater pollution arising during operation;
- Habitat disturbance /species disturbance during construction and operation from humans, lighting and/or noise.

#### 8.4. Submissions and Observations

8.4.1. There were no third-party observations. The submissions from the prescribed bodies of TII and DAU (archaeology) did not raise any issues relevant to Appropriate Assessment. There is no submission from the Planning Authority.

#### 8.5. European Sites and Identification of Likely Significant Effects

8.5.1. The applicant's AA Screening Report considers European Sites within a zone of influence, which has been determined by having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed works and the development, the nature of the receiving environment including ecological features and their sensitivity, and the source-pathway-receptor model.

8.5.2. There are two European Sites within the zone of influence and the following table lists these sites and the potential for connectivity and likely significant effects.

Table 1 Could the project undermine the conservation objectives 'alone'				
European Site(s)	Qualifying interest/features	Potential Impact	Impact pathway/Zone of influence	Screening Conclusion
Lower River Suir SAC (002137)	Objective: to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest.  1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>	Pollution from surface water run-off; Disturbance.	SAC is 1.1m-1.7km from the site, to the southwest.  There are no pathways or connectivity to the habitats and/or species of this site. There are no surface water courses and no	Screened out.

	<p>1092 White-clawed Crayfish  <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>  1095 Sea Lamprey  <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>  1096 Brook Lamprey  <i>Lampetra planeri</i>  1099 River Lamprey  <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>  1103 Twaite Shad <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>  1106 Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>  1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>)  1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>  1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)  3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation  6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels  91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles  91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)  91J0 <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles</p>		<p>hydrological links to the River Barrow or to the Newtown Stream nearby.</p> <p>All foul and surface water runoff, once the facility is operational, will be contained on site and discharged to urban drainage systems.</p> <p>There are no predicted ex situ effects in terms of birds given the habitat present and the results of bird surveys.</p> <p>Given the distance of the proposed substation from the river and given the limited scale of works related to the UGC, disturbance effects on birds are not considered a concern.</p>	
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)	<p>Objective: to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest.</p> <p>1029 Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>  1092 White-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>  1095 Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></p>	<p>Pollution from surface water runoff;  Disturbance.</p>	<p>SAC is c. 91m-700m to the south of the development site.</p> <p>There are no pathways or connectivity to the habitats and/or species of this site. There are no surface water courses and no hydrological links to the River Barrow or to</p>	

	<p>1096 Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> 1099 River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> 1103 Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> 1106 Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) (only in fresh water) 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 1421 Killarney fern <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> 1990 Nore freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitans</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation 4030 European dry heaths 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 7220 * Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles 91E0 * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</p>		<p>the Newtown Stream nearby.</p> <p>All foul and surface water runoff, once the facility is operational, will be contained on site and discharged to urban drainage systems.</p> <p>There are no predicted ex situ effects in terms of birds given the habitat present and results of bird surveys.</p> <p>Given the distance of the proposed substation from the river and given the limited scale of works related to the UGC, disturbance effects on birds are not considered a concern.</p>	
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8.5.3. Having regard to the nature of the proposed development that is before the Board (i.e. the substation development and grid connection), the separation distance from

the designated sites and the absence of any tangible pathways, I consider that there is no potential for likely significant effects on any designated site.

8.5.4. With regard to the potential for in-combination effects, permitted developments in the wider area have been identified. As no residual impacts have been identified, no in-combination issues arise.

8.5.5. I conclude that the proposed development would have no likely direct or indirect significant effects alone or in combination with other plans and projects on the qualifying features of any European site(s). No further assessment is required for the project.

## **8.6. Overall Conclusion – Screening Determination**

8.6.1. I conclude that that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) is not required.

8.6.2. This conclusion is based on:

- Objective information presented in the Screening Report,
- The limited zone of influence of potential impacts, restricted to the immediate vicinity of the proposed development,
- Distance from European Sites,
- The absence of meaningful pathways to any European site.

8.6.3. No measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on European sites were taken into account in reaching this conclusion.

## **9.0 Recommendation**

9.1. Having regard to the foregoing I recommend that permission for the proposed development be granted, subject to conditions, for the following reasons and considerations and subject to attached conditions.

## 10.0 Reasons and Considerations

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to:

- (a) the nature, scale and extent of the proposed development,
- (b) the characteristics of the site and of the general vicinity,
- (c) national, regional and local policy support for developing renewable energy, in particular:

- National Planning Framework, 2018,
- Climate Action Plan, 2023,
- Government Policy Statement on the Security of Electricity Supply, 2021,
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region,
- Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028,

(d) the distance to dwellings or other sensitive receptors from the proposed development,

(e) the planning history of the immediate area including the adjoining permitted Battery Energy Storage System and substation development,

(f) the submissions on file from two prescribed bodies,

(g) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely effects of the proposed development on European Sites,

(h) the report of the Inspector.

### **Appropriate Assessment Screening**

The Board noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. In completing the screening for Appropriate Assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion in the Inspector's report in respect of the identification of the European sites which could potentially be affected, Lower River Suir SAC (002137) and River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002161), and the identification and

assessment of the potential likely significant effects of the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on these European sites in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives. The Board was satisfied that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives.

This screening determination is based on the assessment of the nature and scale of the proposed development, the nature of the European sites identified, the Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests and the separation distance and absence of pathways between the European sites and the proposed development.

### **Proper Planning and Sustainable Development**

It is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and related policy, it would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape or ecology, it would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, it would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience, and would make a positive contribution towards Ireland's renewable energy and security of energy supply requirements. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## **11.0 Conditions**

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as supplemented by the information received on 17 April 2024, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed particulars.



**Reason:** In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. All of the environmental, construction and ecological mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Planning Statement Incorporating Environmental Considerations (January 2024), Appendices, and all other particulars submitted with the application, shall be implemented by the developer in conjunction with the timelines set out therein, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this order.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity and the protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the development.

3. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority 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.

4. The developer shall comply with the transportation requirements of the planning authority and other relevant bodies for such works and services as appropriate.

**Reason:** In the interest of traffic and pedestrian safety.

5. Prior to commencement of development, a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the construction phase shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, generally in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan received on 17 April 2024. The CEMP shall incorporate the following:
  - (a) a detailed plan for the construction phase incorporating, inter alia, construction programme, supervisory measures, noise, dust and surface water management measures including appointment of a site noise liaison officer, construction hours and the management, transport and disposal of construction waste;

(b) a comprehensive programme for the implementation of all monitoring commitments made in the application and supporting documentation during the construction period;

(c) an emergency response plan; and

(d) proposals in relation to public information and communication. A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be kept for inspection by the planning authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of environmental protection and orderly development.

6. The site development and 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.

7. The developer shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) to carry out pre-development archaeological testing in areas of proposed ground disturbance and to submit an archaeological impact assessment report for the written agreement of the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, in advance of any site preparation works or groundworks, including site investigation works/topsoil stripping/site clearance and/or construction works.

(a)The report shall include an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy. Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in-situ, preservation by record (archaeological excavation) and/or monitoring may be required.

(b) Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer.

(c) No site preparation and/or construction works shall be carried out on site until the archaeologist's report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the planning authority.

(d) The planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigative works and/or monitoring following the completion of all archaeological work on site and the completion of any necessary post-excavation work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

**Reason:** To ensure the continued preservation (either in situ or by record) of places, caves, sites, features and other objects of archaeological interest.

8. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

**Reason:** In order to safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.

9. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or such other security as may be acceptable to the planning authority, to secure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site on cessation of the project coupled with an agreement empowering the planning authority to apply such security or part thereof to such reinstatement. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

**Reason:** To ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site.

10. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to

commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

**Reason:** It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.

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.

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Una O'Neill

Senior Planning Inspector

30<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## Appendix 1 - Form 1

### EIA Pre-Screening

<b>An Bord Pleanála Case Reference</b>				
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	110kV substation and 110kV underground grid connection			
<b>Development Address</b>	Townland of Great Island, Kilmokea, County Wexford			
<b>1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?</b> (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)			<b>Yes</b>	
			<b>No</b>	No further action required
<b>2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?</b>				
<b>Yes</b>			EIA Mandatory EIAR required	
<b>No</b>		No	Proceed to Q.3	
<b>3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?</b>				
		<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Comment (if relevant)</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>No</b>		No	Development is not of a class	No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
<b>Yes</b>		No		

**4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?**

<b>No</b>	N/A	<b>Preliminary Examination required</b>
<b>Yes</b>	N/A	<b>Screening Determination required</b>

Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_30<sup>th</sup> April 2024\_\_