Inspector's Report
ABP-322045-25

Development	Construction of a 110kV substation and connection to the national grid.
Location	Mihanboy, Taduff East, Monksland, and other townlands, County Roscommon
Planning Authority	Roscommon County Council
Applicant(s)	TDC Community Solar Park Limited
Type of Application	Application for approval under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.
Prescribed Bodies	• Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. • Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. • Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy. • Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). • Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). • HSA • The Heritage Council.

- An Taisce.
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council).
- Failte Ireland.

Observers	None
Date of Site Inspection	4th September 2025.
Inspector	Philip Davis

1. Introduction

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-3108460-21** for a 110kV substation, where the Commission decided that the development would fall within the scope of section 182A of the Act and would be strategic infrastructure.

The proposed development includes a transformer station and associated plant on a low lying field west of the town of Athlone intended to facilitate the connection of a solar farm and BESS with an existing full permission. The grid connection is underground and runs across countryside mostly along existing farm lanes, through an industrial estate, connecting to an existing transformer station on the outer suburbs of Athlone, all within County Roscommon.

2. Site Location and Description

General area

The linear site runs through typical lowlands within the catchment of the River Shannon, west of the rivers historic crossing point at Athlone. The area is generally typical of the post glacial landscape, running across undulating low hills and eskers. West of Athlone is a suburban and urban fringe area and an extensive area of industry and commercial uses in the townland of Monkslands. The M6 motorway runs south of the site, mostly within a cutting. The western extent of the area is agricultural land, but there is a permitted solar farm (**PL Ref. 23/197**). The overall landscape is typical of the wider Shannon floodplain – relatively flat with small fields in pasture or conifer plantation, with extensive peatlands (mostly extracted, frequently revegetated). There are somewhat haphazard sprawls of urban development west of Athlone, including industrial and residential estates, with many

small individual developments. West of the outskirts of the town the site includes agricultural lands north of the M6.

Site

The site consists of an extensive linear area of land on the western side of the Shannon with a total area of 16.6 hectares, extending from an existing substation (Athlone 110kV substation) in a generally south-westerly direction through an industrial estate, then along the boundary of the M6 at a point where it is generally elevated above the landscape, before terminating at a minor road in the townland of Curraghaleen. The land is mostly either agriculture, roadside edge, or cleared land within an industrial estate.

From east to west, the site commences at an existing substation on the south-western side of the M6, as it runs through the scattered suburbs of the western side of Athlone on the west bank of the Shannon. The site incorporates an element of the M6 (no works are proposed for the motorway), and includes Cushla Lawn, a suburban service road, and then includes the highway element of a bypassed section of the R362. This is a wide single lane each way carriageway with footpath on either side. For this section, it runs past late 20th century suburban estates on either side.

After around 1km, the site runs south through a small estate *called Ceathru na Gloch*, dropping in level (via a retained wall), to run through the Westpoint/ Daneswell Business Centre, a mostly retail and commercial edge of town development on the north side of the R362 bypass. It crosses this road, running through an older industrial estate (Monksland Industrial Estate). It continues south, along a small access road that is currently being developed as the access to a peaking power plant and associated infrastructure, including a 110kV transformer station (newly built).

The site continues to the south-west across some flat former farmland to the north bank of the Cross River, a tributary of the Shannon, before this river goes under the

M6 in a culvert. The site then continues along the northern side of the M6, along a maintenance access track.

After just over 1km the site crosses a minor third class road (there is a bridge for this road over the M6), before running along another service road (part of the public highway) for several hundred metres. It then runs in a mostly westerly direction across low lying marshy fields along a minor unnamed stream – this is the proposed location of the transformer station. It rises gently in level to typical undulating Roscommon landscape with small fields and occasional karst outcrops – much of this area has planning permission for a solar farm. The site joins a farm track – a boreen of around 2 metres in width which runs through what appears to have been a former clachan settlement, rising over a shallow ridge before gently descending in level before joining a third class road, where the site terminates in a small cluster of farm dwellings.

3. Proposed Development

The applicant is seeking a permission for the construction of a 110kV electrical substation in the townland of Mihanboy adjacent to the site of the permitted TDC Community Solar Park and the permitted Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). It includes:

- 2 single storey control buildings with welfare facilities, 1 no. capacitor bank, 1 no. diesel generator, associated electrical plant and apparatus, internal compound roads, access tracks, fire wall, security fencing, entrance gates, 4 no. lightening masts (18 m above ground), lampposts, underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, rainwater holding tank, site drainage infrastructure, and all ancillary works.

Additionally, it includes:

- Widening and realignment of the access track permitted under Pl Ref. 20/36 and Pl. Ref. 23/197, and the provision of passing bays to facilitate construction access;
- Removal of existing stone walls along the northern field boundary of the existing site entrance of the junction of the L020265 / L-2026, along the

access track to be realigned. Stone walls to be reinstated along the access track and along the southwestern boundary of the proposed 110kV substation at Mihanboy.

- Minor amendments to the layout of the solar array permitted under PL Ref. 20/36 consisting of the removal of permitted panels to facilitate the proposed realignment and widening of the access track;
- The provision of a new temporary access track in the townland of Curaghleen, adjacent to the existing junction of the L-20265/L-2026 to facilitate the delivery of abnormal roads;
- Realignment of the existing entrance to the stie of the permitted TDC Community Solar Park at the junction of the L-20265 / L-2026, and the reinstatement of the field boundary and gate.
- 110kV underground cabling and associated fibre cabling predominantly in the public road corridor, connecting the proposed 110kV substation in the townland of Mihanboy to the existing Athlone 110kV substation in the townland of Monksland with underground ducting under the N6 national road, along with associated temporary compounds and other infrastructure.
- The provision of new access and maintenance tracks where required along the proposed underground cabling route;
- Reinstatement of the road or track surface above cabling trench along existing roads and tracks;
- Site drainage, and;
- All associated site development works, landscaping, apparatus and ancillary works.

The application to the Commission includes:

- Plans and Specifications.
- Planning & Environmental Report
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP);
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

- Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
- LVIA photomontages
- Traffic and Transport Statement
- Noise Assessment
- Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Impact Assessment
- Geology and Hydrogeology Assessment
- Civils Design Report
- Flood Risk Assessment.
- Construction Methodology Report

4. Consultations

4.1 Prescribed Bodies

Details of the application to the Board were circulated to the following prescribed bodies:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy.
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).
- HSA
- The Heritage Council.
- An Taisce.
- Uisce Eireann
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council).
- Failte Ireland.

4.2 Submissions

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU)

Archaeological Impact Assessment is noted. A number of conditions are recommended – i.e. C3, C4, C5 and C6 from the OPR Practice Note PN03: Planning Conditions – October 2022. These relate to pre-work archaeological assessment.

It is noted that the application includes waterway crossings. In the light of this, a specific underwater AIA is requested.

The NIS is noted – NRA guidelines referred to with regard to possible otter holt near one river crossing. Notes vegetation removal and refers to policy in the fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan that such loss be quantified and that equivalent compensatory measures are proposed.

Health and Safety Authority

States that the proposed development appears to be outside the scope of the Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015.

Uisce Eireann

- Notes that no connections to Uisce Eireann's water and wastewater networks are included.
- The hydrology and hydrogeology assessment submitted is considered acceptable and it is concluded that it does not pose a risk to UE water sources or abstractions.
- Notes that the proposed grid connection is close to UE assets and could potentially impact on EU underground infrastructure in the area. The applicant is requested to submit details to EU for assessment of feasibility.

Two conditions requested:

1. The applicant shall lodge a diversion enquiry with Uisce Eireann clearly illustrating all proposed interactions with UE assets, depth profiles, designs and layouts localized works and any other information necessary to complete a feasibility assessment, prior to works commencing.

2. The applicant shall enter into a works agreement, as deemed necessary by Uisce Eireann, prior to works commencing.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

- The principle of the development is welcomed.
- Notes policy on works on, and requiring access to, national roads is outlined in the spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2012. It is noted that no direct access to a national road is proposed.
- Notes DoT circular RW 07 of 2025 with regard to the placement of medium or high voltage electricity assets.
- It is noted that the red lined area encroaches onto the M6 Motorway reservation, and some elements (including joint bay proposals) may encroach onto the motorway boundary. For the avoidance of doubt, TII has not provided any consent for works within the motorway reservation.

Requestions two conditions in this regard:

1. This permission does not approve nor imply consent for any works within the M6 motorway reservation: **Reason**: In the interests of clarity.
2. It is noted that the grid connection is in the vicinity of two national road structures, Mihanboy Bridge and Cross River Bridge. It is requested that a condition be set that all crossings in the vicinity of national roads structures be submitted to TII for approval.

- Notes that other consents, including local authority consent, is needed for the N6 HDD crossing.
- Notes that the application refers to possible abnormal loads, without detail. States that all such abnormal weight loads must be done in line with road authority approval.
- It is recommended that consultation with RCC takes place over the potential impact on the active travel greenway.

- It is reiterated that while TII has no objection to the proposed development, no part of the submission shall be construed as TII giving consent to access or alter any national road infrastructure assets.

Applicants Response

Development Applications Unit

It is confirmed that the proposed development includes for the measures set out by the DAU for archaeological monitoring and protection. This is set out in the application submission and in the CEMP.

With regard to the request for underwater archaeology, it is stated that works will only take place at the crossing of the River Cross, and provisions for underwater archaeology should only be considered for this section – other river crossings are to be carried out via horizontal drilling, so there would be no physical interference with any archaeology on the riverbed or banks.

With regard to nature conservation, it is restated that all measures set out in the NIS will be followed. It is also confirmed that any hedgerow or other habitat loss will be quantified with proposals for compensatory measures.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

It is confirmed that the grid connection will be done in a manner to ensure full safety and usage of the national road system.

It is clarified that while the red line area encroaches onto the M6 motorway reservation, no works encroach upon the M6 reservation or any TII lands. There is no objection to a condition ensuring that no works impact on the M6.

It is acknowledged that the grid connection route will cross the national road network by HDD and the applicant commits to consulting with TII and RCC on all relevant works.

It is acknowledged that additional licensing may be required in relation to the HDD crossing.

It is acknowledged that some abnormal loads may be required – all required measures will be taken in accordance with licensing and consultation with TII.

It is stated that there is no conflict between the proposals and any Greenways or active Travel proposals.

Uisce Eireann.

It is confirmed that the proposed development does not include for any connections to UE infrastructure.

With regard to existing UE infrastructure, a detailed strategy for managing interaction with UE assess will be agreed prior to any works. Any required agreements will be entered into, if needed, prior to the works commencing.

Development Applications Unit

Archaeology:

All mitigation measures to be carried out in accordance with the Archaeological Impact Assessment submitted and additional details required by the DAU. It is stated that all reports and mitigation required by the DAU as set out would be implemented.

With regard to underwater archaeology, it is noted that there would be instream works required for one crossing only.

Nature conservation:

The applicant confirms that all mitigation measures outlined in the NIS with regard to instream works and horizontal drilling will be strictly adhered to. NRA guidelines on the treatments of Otter holts will be adhered to.

It is confirmed that no net loss of habitat will be incurred due to the project.

4.3 Public Submissions

None.

4.4 Planning Authority

The planning authority submitted a Planning Report on the proposed development to the Board on the 7th May 2025. Key points are as follows:

Outlines a number of planning permissions of relevance, including PD/20/36 – a 10 year planning permission for a 70 hectare solar farm with associated infrastructure, PD/21/350 for an extension of the above solar farm over an area of 60 hectares, and PD/23/197, for a battery storage facility with a capacity of c.80MW. Notes that the proposed development is intended to facilitate the above permitted developments.

Notes that the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 is generally supportive of the development of a renewable energy base in line with national and regional policy.

The EIA Screening is noted – it is considered that it does not fall within the class of a development that may require EIAR.

The AA is noted – it is considered that the NIS adequately addresses the core issue and RCC agrees with the conclusion that the proposed development, individually or in combination worth other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of European Sites.

Outlines internal consultations with the Roads Department and Regeneration Unit (the responses are attached in Appendix 1 to the report – these include detailed conditions requested for traffic control during construction. The Regeneration Unit requests that ABP gives due consideration to the proposed active travel connection from Monkslands Community Park to *Ceathru no Gloch* residential estate – it is requested that the footprint of the proposed active travel connection be excluded from the grid connection or consideration be given to condition the applicant to provide the connection.

The report concludes that the proposal is intrinsically linked and necessary for the permitted TDC Community Solar Park, and it is acknowledged that it will contribute to the achievement of Irelands binding renewable energy targets. It is generally satisfied that likely adverse environmental effects have been identified and

sufficiently managed and mitigated. The Board/Commission is requested to take account of the suggested conditions set out in Appendix 1.

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4.5 Applicant's Response to Planning Authority

The submission on the file from the PA, prescribed bodies and public observers have been circulated to the applicant. The response received from the applicant addresses each of the submission made:

Roscommon County Council

Roads Department

It is acknowledged that the preferred option is to lay all cables as near as possible to the centre of the carriageway if it is not possible to locate it to the outside, in accordance with TII Guidelines.

It is noted that the Roads Departments request for a minimum depth of 1.075 metres is not in accordance with EirGrid specifications – a formal derogation from EirGrid will be requested. It is confirmed that the applicant will provide all necessary details prior to works commencing.

It is confirmed that the applicant will position the top of the joint bays to be at a minimum depth of 300mm below the road surface. It is also confirmed that all road surfaces will be made good according to agreements with the Roads Authority and others.

With regard to a statement that the Roads department that the project will lead to an ongoing maintenance or repair bill, and requests a contribution of €3000 per km of affected roadway, it is submitted that the works will be designed in full compliance with EirGrid/ESBN standards and it is stated that the applicant should not be subject to an ongoing maintenance liability for work that are not in their ownership. It is argued that this fee (over and above charges associated with the Road Opening Licence process) is unwarranted and unreasonable.

General conditions:

It is confirmed that a construction management plan will be submitted and that a Road Opening Licence will be applied for. All relevant insurances will be in place. It

is also confirmed that a bond is acceptable, and all relevant stakeholders will be involved in consultations.

With regard to cable route suggested conditions, it is confirmed that the applicant will provide the appropriate notification, and all relevant signage and traffic management plans will be implemented. A pre-condition survey of all roads will be carried out, in addition to any necessary structural survey son adjacent properties. All works will be in accordance with TII specifications and all other relevant specifications. It is noted that it is proposed to cross the Cross River via a horizontal directional drilling (HDD) as per the submitted drawings. All works to drains will be in accordance with RCC requirements.

All requirements for abnormal loads and haul roads will be followed in accordance with RCC requirements.

With regard to the Monksland Community Park, the concerns of RCC are acknowledged. It is submitted that the grid connection will not interfere with the construction or operation of the active travel route and will not impede it in any way. It is argued that there is no conflict between the proposed grid connection and the delivery of the Councils active travel strategy.

5. Planning History

The following planning applications are relevant to the proposed development:

PD/20/36 – a 10 year planning permission for a 70 hectare solar farm with associated infrastructure,

PD/21/350 for an extension of the above solar farm over an area of 60 hectares, and

PD/23/197, for a battery storage facility with a capacity of c.80MW as part of the above development.

In addition, the Board granted permission for 20 wind turbines which are intended to connect to the Athlone 110kV substation (**ABP-313750-22**).

ABP-317588-23 – A 110kV single bay air insulated substation in Monkland.

6. Policy Context

6.1 EU, National and Regional Legislation/Policy

EU, national and regional policy documents are relevant in respect of the proposed development and include:

- EU Directive 2009/28/EC and Directive 2018/2001/EU (Renewable Energy).
- National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040.
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended.
- National Mitigation Plan, 2017.
- National Adaption Framework, 2018.
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- Climate Action Plan, 2025.
- Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032.

The legislation and policy documents essentially promote, and set targets for, transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society and support the development of associated infrastructure, including the development of the electricity transmission system, to support this transition (e.g., to accommodate more diverse flows), subject to environmental safeguards.

6.2 Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028

Section 5.7 of the plan recognises the potential for rural areas to accommodate wind, hydro and solar energy projects.

Policy **CAEE 8.1** outlines support to European and national objectives for climate action, adaption and mitigation.

CAEE 8.2 acknowledges the National Climate Change Strategy.

CAEE 8.9 notes that all applications for electricity infrastructure should include comprehensive studies on technical and environmental aspects.

Other policies state the need for developments to assist in achieving national targets in renewable energy, supports renewable energy and associated infrastructure,

requires that renewable energy developments do not undermine the preservation of the natural and built environment, and that renewable energy proposals bring a direct socio-economic benefit to the community (**CAEE 8.12**).

Further policies note the need to secure the preservation in place of archaeological monuments (BH 9.13), protect biodiversity (NH 10.1, NH 10.4 and NH 10.13), geological heritage (NG 10.11). The character of the landscape must also be protected (NH10.25).

7. Natural Heritage Designations

Nearest sites are:

- River Callows SAC (site code 000216)
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096).
- Lough Ree SAC (site code 000440)
- Lough Ree SPA (site code 004064)
- Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC (site code 002339)
- Castlesampson Esker SAC (site code 001625).

8. EIA Screening

The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations). No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination. I refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 to this report.

9. Planning Assessment

9.1 Context

This proposal is for an extensive linear development of largely underground cabling, running under the public road, private maintenance tracks, a rural boreen and farm access track and some open countryside. It links two existing transformer stations and includes a proposed new 110Kv station on agricultural land on the north side of the M6 motorway as it runs west from the town of Athlone. It is intended to facilitate the development of permitted solar farms in County Roscommon, west of Athlone. The solar farm was permitted in PL ref. 20/36 and PL ref. 21/350 and cover some 130 hectares of the townlands of Taduff West, Taduff East, Creagh, Cuilglass and Curraghaleen.

A pre-application and SID determination were made by the Board (**ABP-3108460-21**), which determined that it

Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the application, and inspected the site, I consider that the main issues in the planning assessment relate to the following matters:

- Compliance with Policy
- Principle of Development
- Visual impacts
- Cultural heritage and archaeology
- Construction impacts
- Archaeology and heritage
- Ecology
- Geology/hydrogeology/hydrology
- Noice
- Ecology
- Residential amenity

- Community impacts
- Construction impacts
- Conclusions (and conditions)

9.2 Compliance with Policy

National, Regional, Local policy

The overall policy context for renewable energy (including solar power) and associated infrastructure is set by EU targets for renewables (**Directive 2018/2001/EU**) and related plans and guidance including the **REPowerEU Plan** from 2022 and the **Energy Roadmap 2050**. Irish national policy is set within **the National Planning Framework**, the **National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030**, the White Paper '**Irelands Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030'**, the **National Energy & Climate Plan 2021-2030**, the **National Renewable Energy Action Plan** (on foot of **Directive 2009/28/EC**) and the **Climate Action Plan 2025.** The latter sets clear statutory requirements for developing low carbon energy.

In other respects, Regional and local policy looks favourably upon proposals to upgrade and build in resilience to facilitating new energy infrastructure, in particular for renewable energy.

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly RSES 2020-2032 sets out policies to support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network (policies RPO 8.1 to 8.4).

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 has no specific policies relating to subsurface infrastructure, but Chapter 8 on Climate Action, Energy and Environment sets out policies to support the achievement in targets for renewable energy (CAEE 8-3 to 8.8) and to facilitate a modern electricity network (CAEE 8.9).

9.3 Principle of Proposal

The proposed development is stated to be for the purpose of facilitating two fully permitted interconnected solar farms and a battery storage facility – planning

application **PD/20/36** – a 10 year planning permission for a 70 hectare solar farm with associated infrastructure, **PD/21/350** for an extension of the above solar farm over an area of 60 hectares, and **PD/23/197**, for a battery storage facility with a capacity of c.80MW. It is accepted by the planning authority that the requirement for this connection was fully considered at the time of the application. None of the conditions of these permissions preclude the provision of a connection to the grid as proposed. There are no indications that the circuit or transformer is to facilitate otherwise non-permitted developments in the area. In this context I therefore consider that the proposed development is required for the construction and connection of a permitted development and that the details submitted are in line with the permitted solar farm/BESS and are not contrary to any condition set for the above permissions.

Visual impacts

The applicant provided a series of photomontages for the proposed development – focusing on the transformer element as the visual impacts of the network connection is considered temporary only. I consider that the choice of viewpoints and the visualisations are reasonable and provide an accurate prediction of the overall impact. A **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA**) produced by MKO consultants was also submitted. This is stated to have been carried out in line with the DoEHLG 'Landscape and Landscape Assessment' guidelines, 2000. The submissions with the application do not address the landscape impacts.

In the landscape characterisation in the development plan, the area west of Athlone is indicated as of Moderate Value. It is a landscape characterised by low lying lands with a few low hills, with extensive areas of raised bog and eskers. I note that while the eastern part of the site is rural in nature, the lands have permission for 70 hectares of solar farms – these two permissions include for the preservation and enhancement of most of the existing field patterns and hedgerows.

There are no designated protected views or scenic routes within the vicinity of the proposed transformer station or route. The Green Heartlands Cycle Way is a designated on-road cycling route (using the L2026 road). The route does not cross the proposed cycleway route and the proposed transformer station is not visible from

it. Although not addressed in the LVIA, I note that Eurovelo 2, the proposed long distance European cycle route that connects Galway to Dublin passes to the south of the lands, on the opposite side of the M6 motorway. I do not consider that there is any visual impact due to the separation distance and topography.

There are a number of archaeological sites of note in the vicinity, including Drum Monastic Site and Meehambree Dolmen – although the latter is around 500 metres from the site, I am satisfied that the settings of neither would be impacted upon as the topography and vegetation provides effective shielding.

The eastern section of the route, through the proposed transformer station, runs through rural countryside next to the M6, and then a rapidly growing industrial/business estate, and then across roads and through urban fringe residential areas. All the visual impacts will be either very minor or temporary in nature (i.e. during construction). The western section runs through some countryside and a boreen/farm track (mostly to be developed as a solar farm). I am satisfied that any visual impacts along this section will be temporary and very minor in nature.

The primary visual impact will be for the proposed transformer station, to be located in agricultural land west of a minor third class road and accessed via a road/track running parallel to the M6. The impacts are indicated in the submitted visualisation. There are no dwellings or other sensitive receptors adjoining or near the site – I am satisfied that it will not be in view of any existing dwelling. The adjoining road/track (it is public highway for one section before merging with a private farm access) seems be little used by the public. The main views are from the M6 and higher ground in the vicinity. There are no views from the L2026, the closest country road.

The LVIA indicates that the impact will be Medium, with a significant change in the character of the site itself (wet grazing land), but generally not having a significant impact over the wider area. While the proposed transformer site is some distance from the urban fringe of Athlone, the proximity to the M7 ensures that the land cannot be considered of the highest amenity or landscape value. I therefore concur with the conclusion of the LVIA.

The proposed transformer has cumulative impacts with the permitted solar farm would be generally quite significant, but the requirement for such infrastructure was

considered with the application and permission for the BESS facility, and I do not consider that the overall cumulative impact would be significant.

The LVIA concludes that:

> *There are no high landscape or visual effects envisioned as a result of the Proposed Development. The highest landscape and visual effects are likely to be very localised, and considering the scale of the Proposed Development, it will not have any substantial impact on the character of the rural landscape, or on views from the local road network. With mitigation established, there will likely be only limited views of the infrastructural elements of the Proposed Development from the M6 motorway.*

I concur with this conclusion, and I consider that residual impacts can be addressed by way of a standard condition with regard landscape screening and the strengthening of existing hedgerows around the proposed transformer station. Any impacts from the connecting power lines will be temporary in nature and generally negligible.

Cultural heritage and archaeology.

The route follows mostly existing roads and/or farm tracks and boreens. The proposed transformer station is on what seems to have been undisturbed land, although the adjoining watercourse appears to have been straightened at some time in the 19th Century. The DAU has requested archaeological assessments of the route and the site for the transformer and also requested underwater assessments of the two watercourses crossed by the line.

The applicant submitted an Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Impact Assessment (AACIA) for the work, produced by Rubicon Heritage consultants. This report was based on a desk top study and field inspection in accordance with departmental guidelines.

The study identified 12 Recorded Monuments within the study area. None are directly impacted upon by the transformer station or underground grid connection. No protected structures were identified, and there are no ACA's no NIAH's or other features identified in the development plan or other surveys near the site. The field

and desk top surveys identified a number of possible sites of interest. The survey identifies in section 4.3.3 some potential cumulative impacts with permitted developments in the area, although these are not considered significant, subject to standard mitigation measures. The proposed mitigation measures are set out in section 6.2 of the report. These relate primarily to archaeological works and monitoring on the areas of excavation, with particular reference to the 13 sites with some possible potential identified in the report.

The DAU requested specific archaeological underwater surveys of the two river crossings. These crossings are at the Cross River near the Monksland industrial estate, and the watercourse just west of the proposed transformer site. I note that the applicant has confirmed that there would be instream works carried out online on the latter watercourse – HDD (horizontal directional drilling) will be used for the Cross River, and as such there will be no direct or indirect impacts on any potential archaeology in the watercourse. I note that the other watercourse is on what seems to be an artificial alignment – from the OS plans it was most likely actively subject to drainage in the 19th Century. It would seem highly unlikely that there would be any remains to be found on this site or around the watercourse. I would therefore consider it to be unnecessarily onerous upon the applicant to require a specialist underwater survey of either stream. I therefore consider that, notwithstanding the request from the DAU, a standard archaeological condition for advance geophysical survey and trench testing under license, as well as active monitoring works, in addition to a wade survey and metal detector survey (as set out in the Section 6.2 of the AACIA) be confirmed in any decision to grant.

With regard to the wider setting of identified archaeological remains or historic buildings, I am satisfied that the primary visible element of the proposed development – the transformers station - is not within the visual envelope of significant local features, either recorded ancient monuments or protected structures, or other features of high cultural significance. As such, no mitigation beyond the proposed landscaping would be necessary. I note that the boreen to the west that the cable runs through appears to be an historic feature of the landscape, but the actual route will not be interfered with, and much of it is within the permitted solar farm area. The application includes for some alterations and widening of access

tracks in the area which would increase the removal of existing boundaries, but I do not consider that these have significant heritage interest.

Geology/hydrogeology/hydrology

The applicants submitted a Geology and Hydrogeology Assessment of the proposals (GHA). A Flood Risk Assessment by Nijhuis Saur Industries was also submitted. There were no submissions relating to the details.

The route runs through an area of predominantly limestone bedrock over glacial and fluvioglacial deposits. Most of the route is on already disturbed land (i.e. along existing roads/tracks). There are a number of eskers in the area, with pronounced kame/kettle topography in places (some of these host small lakes, but not in the immediate vicinity of the route). There are karstic features identified in the area – the report states that there were none identified within the site. I noted in my site visit some exposed karst rocks in the field around the proposed transformer site, although it was unclear as to whether these are exposed bedrock or erratics.

The lands overlie what are classified as locally important aquifers, indicated as moderately productive. There are no source protection zones within the study area. The groundwater body is classified as having 'good status under the WFD. No contaminated land was identified in the study (this assumes no contaminated material within the road excavations).

It is noted that the works will impact on drainage on the transformer site. Standard measures are proposed for the construction works (see CEMP), and a SUDS methodology is proposed for the substation. It is concluded that the impact on geology and groundwater would be minor and localised and can be addressed by the suggested mitigation measures.

The Flood Risk Assessment indicated that the site for the transformer station was not subject to pluvial or fluvial flooding on the basis of the OPW flood risk mapping data and a other studies. No groundwater or pluvial flooding risk was identified, and the use of Suds criteria and appropriate water holding tanks is proposed to ensure no increase of down-stream flood risks.

In addition to this report, Tobin consultants also submitted an Engineering Services Report, which primarily assesses water supply, wastewater and stormwater for the site. It is proposed to have a foul water holding tank on the site for occasional staff use. Stormwater will discharge to two soakaways within the transfer site, and there will be an attenuation storm water tank.

I do not consider that there are any conditions required over and above standard conditions to address geological and hydrogeological issues and the protection of water resources during construction. With regard to the Water Framework Directive, the Screening and Assessment is attached in the Appendix to this report.

Noise

The applicants submitted a Noise Assessment of the proposed transformer station produced by AWN consulting. No submissions were made on the application relating to operational noise (construction noise is also addressed in the CEMP).

The noise report included an environmental baseline study, carried out in accordance with ISO 1996: 2017. It is noted that there are just two dwellings within the vicinity, identified in Figure 2 of the noise assessment. During construction a noise barrier is to be erected to attenuate any construction noise. It is indicated that as the two receptors are more than 250 metres from the site, it is anticipated that construction noise effects are negative, not significant and short term . The grid connection works are closer to some receptors, and will be along the main road along the route. It is also noted that there may be a minor increase in traffic associated with operational impacts.

Mitigation measures for both construction and operational phases are set out in section 6.1 and 6.2. It is concluded that neither construction nor operational noise will be excessive if appropriate mitigation measures are in place – the former will be short term over. There are no significant operational noises identified.

Having regard to the nature of the area, specifically the distance of the transformer station well away from likely receptors, I concur with the conclusion of the noise report, and I would conclude that with appropriate standard conditions, there would be minimal noise disruption, and any operational noise impacts will be negligible.

Ecology

In addition to the NIS, the applicants submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) produced by MKO consultants. This is based on desk and field (walk over) surveys of the entire route. There were specific surveys for invasive species, badgers, otters, bats and surveys of the two watercourses.

The DAU requested that all mitigation measures set out in the NIS be implemented, and that suitable compensatory measures should be put in case for any habitat loss.

From west to east, the site follows a farm track with mature hedgerows (primarily hawthorn and blackthorn) on either side - the track gradually becomes dominated by meadow species. It crosses through improved agricultural grassland used for cattle grazing, with some occasional ash and sycamore (some may have to be removed for passing bays).

The substation is within a field of improved grassland (currently grazed by sheep) with rushes and some mature hawthorn, in addition to heavily vegetated drainage ditches. The treelines along the edge of the site are predominantly hawthorn and hazel.

Further east, the site is largely within existing tracks along bare ground with some meadow and grassy verges, with narrow stretches of oak-ash-hazel woodland, scrub and recolonised bare ground. Close to Monklands estate there is some immature woodland and wet grassland, along with scrub. The Cross River (where there is a proposed HDD undercrossing) is classified as a lowland depositing river. The site then crosses wet willow-alder ash woodland, some reed/sedge swamp, and artificial habitats as it enters the industrial estate (at this point, there is a construction site associated with a peaking power plant).

The remainder of the route passes along urban and suburban roads. There is some mixed broadleaf woodland on each side of the M7, where the HDD runs under the motorway.

It is noted that there are no Annex 1 habitats along the route.

The otter survey took place in August 2024 at the location of the proposed HDD crossing. A potential burrow was recorded, and two otters were recorded swimming g in the area – this is now assumed to be an active holt. No evidence of badger

activity was detected within the development site, but it is considered likely that badger utilise the woodland/scrub habitats as commuting corridors and commuting areas. The treelines and hedgerows were identified as having moderate commuting and foraging potential for bats. The Cross River is considered possible habitat. A dusk activity survey of the permitted BESS site identified three bat species in the area. No bats were identified emerging from the trees. Bat activity is considered to be low overall – mostly Common pipistrelle.

A bird survey identified a number of relatively common species. Additionally, a kestrel was observed commuting south of the proposed cross River crossing, and two kingfisher were observed commuting west of the site. No evidence for kingfisher burrows were identified within the site.

Aquatic surveys of the tow watercourses detected a single possible white clawed crayfish burrow. No other sites were detected. The river is classified as having negligible potential for spawning habitat for lamprey or salmonids.

Section 5 of the EcIA addresses the predicted impacts of the works. Table 1 sets out potential impact on each identified habitat of construction works with proposed mitigation included in additional tables within section 5. For the most part, impacts will be temporary in nature, although there will be loss of wet grazing land and small sections of hedgerow. Without mitigation, it is predicted that there could be impacts on otter, badger, bats, birds, and reptiles/amphibians, primarily due to disturbance during construction and temporary/permanent loss of sections of habitat. The mitigation measures set out (also set out in the NIS and CEMP) address these impacts by way of monitoring and standardised controls during the works. Section 5.3 addresses specifically operational impacts on fauna, setting out standard design impacts, primarily on water run-off, to mitigate any impacts.

Impacts on designated EU habitats are set out in Section 5.5 and addressed in more detail in the NIS.

Section 6 of the EcIA addresses cumulative impacts with other proposed and active projects in the area. It concludes that there are no potentially significant cumulative and/or in-combination pollution, disturbance or habitat loss effects.

The EcIA concludes that:

Following consideration of the residual effects (post incorporation of best practice measures) it is concluded that there will be no significant impacts on biodiversity given the nature, scale and design of the proposal'.

The overall proposed works extend over rural countryside and urban fringe, and includes a substantial section that runs parallel to a motorway. Habitats in the area are significantly and visibly degraded from agricultural activities and construction along much of the proposed route. A number of important species, notably otter, kingfisher and pipistrelle bat are known to forage/commute in the area, but I am satisfied that there is no impact on core habitats of these species (note a more detailed assessment in the NIS below). The greatest potential for impacts are during construction, and I am satisfied that the mitigation measures set out in addition to standard best practice methodologies will ensure any impacts will be negligible or minor. The primary impact will be loss of wet grassland due to the BESS and transformer station. This habitat is not of the highest quality, and I would consider it to be a minor loss, adequately compensated for by other elements of the proposed design. I therefore conclude (notwithstanding the NIS issues set out in the attached forms and section below), that the proposed development would not have significant impacts on ecology.

Residential amenity

The proposed cabling runs through residential areas (mostly on main roads), and close to a number of dwellings, but apart from the disruption during construction, is not anticipated to result in any significant amenity impacts.

As noted under the sections above, the transformer area will have visual impacts and some noise emissions, but there are no dwellings nearby, so I am satisfied that the works would not have negative residential amenity impacts on any nearby dwellings or other sensitive receptors.

Community impacts

Roscommon County Council and the TII raised specific concerns about the impact of the proposed works at the proposed active travel route which extends from *Cathru*

na Gloch to Cushla Lawns – the section from where the proposed underground line emerges from the HDD drilling ppoint on the west side of the M6 to where it turns south at *Cathru na Gloch* (Stone Quarter). From the submissions on file, I am satisfied that any disruption will be temporary in nature and will not significantly impact upon the designated active travel route. The standard condition relating to the construction management plan (CEMP) should address the importance of maintaining pedestrian and cyclist safety during the works.

Construction impacts

The applicant submitted a draft Construction and Environmental Plan, a Traffic and Transport Statement and a Construction Methodology Statement and clarified a number of issues in their response to the planning authority, TII, and Uisce Eireann.

A request by **Uisce Eireann** that the applicant lodges a diversion enquiry with Uisce Eireann clearly illustrating all proposed interactions with UE assets, depth profiles, designs and layouts localized works and any other information necessary to complete a feasibility assessment, prior to works commencing and that the applicant shall enter into a works agreement, as deemed necessary by Uisce Eireann, prior to works commencing.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland requested a condition stating unambiguously that the permission does not approve nor imply consent for any works within the M6 motorway reservation: It is also requested that a condition be set that all crossings in the vicinity of national roads structures be submitted to TII for approval.

The planning authority set out recommended conditions in Appendix 1 of their submission. These are (in summary):

- The preferred position for cabling shall be as near to the centre of the carriageway as practicable.
- All ducting laid to be at a minimum depth of 1.075 metres below the finished road surface.
- Detailed design drawings to be submitted for approval (including cross sections showing trench depths) to ensure existing services will not be affected.

- Joint bays to be a minimum depth of 300mm below the road surface.
- A full reinstatement of all road surfaces.
- Annual maintenance contribution of 3000 euro per km of affected roadway required.
- Construction management plan to be submitted to include implementation of all planning conditions.
- RCC to be advised of all contractor details.
- Road opening licence required.
- All required insurances and a performance bond to be in place.
- A dedicated liaison engineer to be appointed by RCC with costs covered by the developer.
- Liaison required with An Garda Siochana, emergency services, bus operators, public, businesses, etc.

The applicants submitted a Construction Methodology (CM) by the TLI Group, focusing on trenching, the protection and relocation of existing services, Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) – the latter for the M6 undercrossing and the Cross River), and watercourse damming/reinstatement. The CM includes typi8cal sections and layouts and photographs for the areas to be subject to HDD.

The applicant submitted a Construction and Environmental Management Plan CEMP) that focuses primarily on setting out standard measures for reducing amenity and environmental impacts during the construction of the substation/BESS and for the cabling. Section 2 of the CEMP sets out the overall project and construction methodology (less detail than in the Construction Methodology document), while section 3 focuses on environmental management, including water quality controls, traffic management proposals, invasive species management and waste management. It is proposed to manage the CEMP through a Construction Manager/ Site supervisor, an Environmental Manager and a Project Ecologist. Mitigation and monitoring measures are set out in section 6 and Table 6.1. These are generally standardised mitigation measures for road trenching works and construction near watercourses.

A Traffic and Transport Statement (TTS) by Alan Lipscombe Traffic & Transport Consultants Ltd includes an overview of the receiving environment), information on baseline traffic (2021 figures), and sets out the proposed construction access layouts for the L2026/L2020265 junction, diversion routes, and an autotrack assessment.

I note the applicant's response to the submissions by EU, TII and RCC, which accept most comments. It is confirmed that there will be no works within the M6 motorway reservation, and that the HDD works will be submitted for agreement. All required consents and licenses for works will be submitted for approval, and it is confirmed that there will be no permanent impact on the Active Travel Route (although some short term disruption would be likely due to road trenching works). RCC submitted very detailed requirements and requested conditions, but I consider that these can largely be addressed by way of a standard condition such that the CEMP be fully agreed prior to works commencing.

The applicant did not accept two requests by RCC – it is stated that the requirement for a minimum dept of 1.075 metres below the road level is contrary to Eirgrid guidelines. It is also argued that the requested €3000 per km annual maintenance cost is excessive and is not typically required for such works.

In the case of the specific requirements for ducting, I would conclude that such works should be carried out in accordance with EirGrid/ESBN standards and be subject to agreement with RCC. Precise details of depth and other technical standards are beyond the normal scope of a S.182 application, in particular when such standards are in place.

With regard to a maintenance contribution, this is not a standard requirement for such works – a normal requirement is for the restoration of such services to the required standard, with a development contribution as required by the scheme. I do not recommend that any additional contributions be set.

I am satisfied that while the works are complex and extend over a large and varied area, including two river crossings and a motorway crossing, they are generally standard works and details are largely addressed through existing EirGRID/ESBN guidelines for such works and other details have been adequately addressed in the CEMP and related documentation. The applicant has committed to consulting with all relevant stakeholders for the works, and I consider that remaining residual

matters can be most suitably addressed by pre-works agreement between the applicant and RCC and other relevant bodies, including TII and UE. I therefore do not consider that any conditions over and above standard conditions for such works are required.

Conclusions

The proposed development is consistent with policy guidelines and is intended to facilitate already permitted solar developments. The submissions from public bodies have focused on design details and controls. I am satisfied that there are no objections in principle to the proposed development, and the key issues raised can be addressed by way of generally standard conditions, primarily relating to the visual impacts of the transformer station, and construction management controls of the cabling.

I note the conditions requested by the planning authority. Most of these relate to specifics about depth and finish of the cabling under the public highway and the repair of the road surface – I consider that these are technical construction details that are better dealt with by way of pre-construction agreements between the relevant parties and are covered by standard conditions.

10. Appropriate Assessment

In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that during the construction phase the proposed development could result in significant effects on the

- River Shannon Callows SAC site code 000216
- Lough Ree SAC site code 000440
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA site code 004096
- Lough Ree SPA site code 004064,

in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS and all associated material submitted I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the River Shannon Callows SAC site code 000216, Lough Ree SAC site code 000440, Middle Shannon Callows SPA site code 004096, and the Lough Ree SPA site code 004064, can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

My conclusion is based on the following:

• Detailed assessment of construction impacts.

• Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed including the closing off of the culvert and removal of the drainage ditch prior to construction works commencing.

• Application of planning conditions to ensure application of these measures.

The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the River Shannon Callows SAC site code 000216, Lough Ree SAC site code 000440, Middle Shannon Callows SPA site code 004096 and Lough Ree SPA site code 004064.

Full details of the assessment are in the forms attached in the appendix to this report.

11. Water Framework Directive

The subject site is located in countryside and urban fringe within the catchment of the Cross (Roscommon)_30 stream – it crosses a minor engineered tributary and goes under the stream using HDD drilling. It overlies two groundwater bodies, Funshinagh (IE_SH_G_091 and Industrial Facility (IE_SH_G_018).

The proposed development comprises the construction of a Transformer station on farmland and an underground electric cable crossing countryside, an industrial

estate, and suburban road. HDD drilling is used to go under the Cross Stream and the motorway.

No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal. I have assessed the project and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- The works are relatively minor in nature and do not directly impinge upon sensitive waterways.
- The works do not require deep excavations over sensitive groundwater bodies.

Conclusion

I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently, can be excluded from further assessment.

12. 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.

Reasons and Considerations

In performing its functions in relation to the making of its decision, the Board had regard to:

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans and in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

The Board also had regard to the following in coming to its decision:

- European legislation, including of particular relevance:
  -
  - Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union.
  - Directive 2011/92/EU (The EIA Directive) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU as implemented by Article 94 and Schedule 6 (paragraphs 1 and 2) of the Planning Regulations as amended.
  - Directive 2000/60/EC, the Water Framework Directive and the requirement to exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the Directive and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive.
- National and regional planning and related policy, including:

- National policy with regard to the development of renewable energy, particularly the NPF First Revision 2025 and National Policy Objective 55.
- The objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.

- Regional and local planning policy, including:
  - Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Western Region;
  - Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- Other relevant national policy and guidance documents.
- The nature, scale and design of the proposed development as set out in the planning application and the pattern of development in the vicinity.
- 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 significant effects of the proposed development on European sites.
- The Natura Impact Statement submitted [and any addendum to same]
- The submissions and observations made in connection with the planning application.
- The report and the recommendation of the Inspector, including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 1 Screening Determination

The Board agreed with the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the River Shannon Callows SAC (site code 000216); Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096); Lough Ree SAC (site code 000440); Lough Ree SPA (site code 004064) are European sites for which there is a possibility of significant effects and must therefore be subject to Appropriate Assessment.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2 Conclusion

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for European Sites in view of the site's Conservation Objectives River Shannon Callows SAC (site code 000216); Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096); Lough Ree SAC (site code 000440); Lough Ree SPA (site code 004064). The Board considered that the information before it was sufficient to undertake a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed development in relation to the sites conservation objectives using the best available scientific knowledge in the field.

In completing the assessment the Board considered, in particular, the following

(i) Site Specific Conservation Objectives for these European Sites,
(ii)Current conservation status, threats and pressures of the qualifying interest features
(iii) likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, specifically run-off from the construction works and,
(iv) mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal.

In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the Appropriate Assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the implications of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European sites, having regard to the site's Conservation Objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Board was satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of European site(s) in view of the site's Conservation Objectives and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of such effects

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would be in accordance with European, national, and regional renewable energy policies and with the provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028, would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or otherwise of property in the vicinity or have an of unacceptable impact on the character of the landscape or on cultural or archaeological heritage, would not have a significant adverse impact on ecology, would be acceptable in terms of traffic impacts and safety and would make a positive contribution to 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.

CONDITIONS

The development 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. 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 commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Natura Impact Statement (NIS), shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the integrity of European Sites.

The attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit details for the disposal of surface water from the site for the written agreement of the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

The developer shall engage a suitably qualified (license eligible) archaeologist to carry out an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) in advance of any site preparation works and groundworks, including site investigation works/topsoil stripping/site clearance/dredging and/or construction works. The AIA and/or UAIA shall involve an examination of all development layout/design drawings, completion of documentary/cartographic/ photographic research and fieldwork, the latter to include, where applicable - geophysical survey, underwater/marine/intertidal survey, metal detection survey and archaeological testing (consent/licensed as required under the National Monuments Acts), building survey/ analysis, visual impact assessment. The archaeologist shall prepare a comprehensive report, including an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy, to be submitted for the written agreement of the planning authority in advance of any site preparation works, groundworks and/or construction works. Where archaeological remains are shown to be present, preservation in-situ, establishment of 'buffer zones', preservation by record (archaeological excavation) or archaeological monitoring may be required and mitigatory measures to ensure the preservation and/or recording of archaeological remains shall be included in the AIA and/or UAIA. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the Local Authority Archaeologist, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer. 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 of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

All of the environmental, construction and ecological mitigation measures, as set out in the Planning and Environmental Report, Ecological Impact Assessment, Landscape Mitigation Plan, Construction and Environmental Management Plan, Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Assessment, and 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 interests of clarity and of the protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the development.

Drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services and, shall otherwise comply with submitted Flood Risk and Drainage assessment. A drainage management plan shall be developed for the construction and the operational phases of the development to include details of the proposed access routes and drains and is to be submitted to the planning authority for approval prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and flood prevention.

The applicant shall lodge a diversion enquiry with Uisce Eireann clearly illustrating all proposed interactions with UE assets, depth profiles, designs and layouts localized works and any other information necessary to complete a feasibility assessment, prior to works commencing.

The applicant shall enter into a works agreement, as deemed necessary by Uisce Eireann, prior to works commencing.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

All road surfaces, culverts, watercourses, verges, and public lands shall be protected during construction and, in the case of any damage occurring, shall be reinstated to the satisfaction of the planning authority at the developer's expense. Prior to commencement of development, a road condition survey shall be carried out to provide a basis for reinstatement works. Details in this regard shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

In the interest of clarity, no works shall be permitted on any part of the M6 motorway without the written approval of Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Reason: In order to protect the road network

Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall comply with the transportation requirements of the planning authority for such works and services as appropriate. Such requirements shall require provision of a detailed Traffic Management Plan and shall include the following details:

(a) Consultation with TII and all private and public companies and road authorities.

(b) Details of haulage routes, control measures for abnormally sized vehicles and an Abnormal Load Assessment.

(c) A road condition survey of roads and bridges along the haul route to be carried out at the developer's expense and to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

(d) Detailed arrangements for construction damage to be made good by the developer to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

(e) Detailed arrangements for temporary traffic management/controls, to include arrangements for the safe operation of the junction of all major roads and safe travel connections, and protocols to keep residents informed,

(f) Construction Route Signage,

(g) Road Opening Licences that will be required,

(h) Arrangements for the phasing of the development and any concurrent or sequential phase of the transformer station or cabling in the public road to connect to the sub-station.

(i) Detailed design of all sightlines to the satisfaction of the planning authority and recessed entrance gate.

(j) Full details shall be included about provisions to fully protect the proposed active travel connection from Monkslands Community Park to *Ceathru no Gloch* residential estate during construction.

Reason: In the interest of traffic and pedestrian safety.

This permission does not approve nor imply consent for any works within the M6 motorway reservation:

Reason: In the interests of clarity.

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 Outline Construction Methodology submitted with the application. 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 Invasive Species Eradication and Management Strategy for the site, to include monitoring post completion of works;

(d) an emergency response plan;

(e) 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, and

(f) an outline strategy for any future decommissioning phase, to include means to protect and enhance biodiversity.

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

The developer shall comply with the following requirements:

(a) No additional artificial lighting shall be installed or operated on site unless authorised by a prior grant of planning permission.

(b) Cables within the site shall be located underground.

(c) External finishes to fencing, gates and exposed metalwork (non-galvanised/subject to EirGrid requirements), roof and external walls of substation, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, of visual and residential amenity.

Prior to the commencement of development, details of CCTV cameras shall be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement. These shall be fixed and angled to face into the site and shall not be directed towards adjoining property or roads.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, of visual and residential amenity.

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.

Philip Davis

Senior Planning Inspector

9th October 2025

EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	ABP-322045-25
Proposed Development Summary	110kV substation with grid connection
Development Address	Various townlands, County Roscommon
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2.
	☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. **EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.**	State the Class here
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
☒ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. **No Screening required.**	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.	

EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. **Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)** **OR** **If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)**	**tate the Class and state the relevant threshold**

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	**Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)**
No ☒	**Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)**

Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	
Proposed Development Summary	110kV substation with grid connection
Development Address	Various townlands, County Roscommon
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	**The proposed development is for a transformer station on agricultural land along with a grid connection. Neither the site nor the alignment of the grid connection includes sites of specific sensitivities or importance.**
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	**The site includes a small area of agricultural land – otherwise it generally involves an underground grid connection under existing roads and agricultural tracks.**
Types and characteristics of potential impacts	

Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	**Conclusion in respect of EIA**
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	**EIA is not required.**

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	The applicant is seeking a permission for the construction of a 110kV electrical substation in the townland of Mihanboy adjacent to the site of the permitted TDC Community Solar Park and the permitted Battery Energy Storage System. It includes: • 2 single storey control buildings with welfare facilities, 1 no. capacitor bank, 1 no. diesel generator, associated electrical plant and apparatus, internal compound roads, access tracks, fire wall, security fencing, entrance gates, 4 no. lightening masts (18 m above ground), lampposts, underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, rainwater holding tank, site drainage infrastructure, and all ancillary works. Additionally, it includes: • Widening and realignment of the access track permitted under Pl Ref. 20/36 and Pl. Ref. 23/197, and the provision of passing bays to facilitate construction access; • Removal of existing stone walls along the northern field boundary of the existing site entrance of the junction of the L020265 / L-2026, along the access track to be realigned. Stone walls to be reinstated along the access track and along the southwestern boundary of the proposed 110kV substation at Mihanboy. • Minor amendments to the layout of the solar array permitted under PL Ref. 20/36 consisting of the removal of permitted panels to facilitate the proposed realignment and widening of the access track; • The provision of a new temporary access track in the townland of Curaghleen, adjacent to the existing junction of the L-20265/L-2026 to facilitate the delivery of abnormal roads;

	• Realignment of the existing entrance to the stie of the permitted TDC Community Solar Park at the junction of the L-20265 / L-2026, and the reinstatement of the field boundary and gate. • 110kV underground cabling and associated fibre cabling predominantly in the public road corridor, connecting the proposed 110kV substation in the townland of Mihanboy to the existing Athlone 110kV substation in the townland of Monksland with underground ducting under the N6 national road, along with associated temporary compounds and other infrastructure. • The provision of new access and maintenance tracks where required along the proposed underground cabling route; • Reinstatement of the road or track surface above cabling trench along existing roads and tracks; • Site drainage, and; • All associated site development works, landscaping, apparatus and ancillary works.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The proposed works primarily involve the construction of an electrical substation within an existing industrial area, with an underground connection consisting of 3 no. 160mm diameter power cable ducts, 2 no. 125 mm diameter communications ducts and an earth duct. These will be placed in a standard 825mm by 131mm deep trench. The works are required to facilitate a large permitted solar farm. Any likely impacts could arise from construction impacts on habitats relating to water quality or QI species that may be present in the area.
Screening report	Y
Natura Impact Statement	Y
Relevant submissions	DAU noted the presence of otter and requested that sufficient mitigation planting be carried out to compensate for hedgerow loss – the applicant confirmed this is acceptable.

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model				
European Site (code)	**Qualifying interests[1] Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)**	**Distance from proposed development (km)**	**Ecological connections[2]**	**Consider further in screening[3] Y/N**
Shannon River Callows SAC (site code 000216)	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	**4km**	**The proposed underground links cross several waterbodies that drain to the SAC**	**Y**
Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096).	Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] Corncrake (Crex crex) [A122] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	**4km**	**No identified QI species on or close to the site, but potential pathway for pollution to the waters of the Callows. In the absence of mitigation there is potential for significant effects.**	**Y**
Lough Ree SAC (000440)	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or	**1.5km**	**Otter may use some of the**	**Y**

	Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Bog woodland [91D0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]		**minor watercourses to be crossed by the proposed power lines.**	
Lough Ree SPA (004064)	Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004] Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053] Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061] Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065] Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067] Coot (Fulica atra) [A125] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]	**1.3km**	**No identified QI species on or close to the site, but potential pathway for pollution to the waters of Lough Ree. In the absence of mitigation there is potential for significant effects.**	**Y**

	Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC (002339)	Turloughs [3180] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	**4 km**	**No Pathway identified. It is not within surface or ground water continuity.**	**N**
Castlesampson Esker SAC (001625)	Turloughs [3180] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	**2.5km**	**No Pathway identified. The site is not in hydraulic continuity with any part of the development site.**	**N**
Pilgrims Road Esker SAC (001776)	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	**9km**	**This SAC is dry grassland with orchids – due to the attenuation distance and lack of pathways there is no likelihood of any effects.**	**N**
Crosswood Bog SAC (002337)	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	**9km**	**There are no pathways between this bog and the development area. No effects anticipated.**	**N**
Mongan Bog SAC (000580)	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	**<10km**	**There are no potential source pathway receptor links for direct or indirect effects.**	**N**

	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]			
Mongan Bog SPA (004017)	Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]	**<10km**	**The site is not a suitable habitat for the White Fronted Goose and there are no pathways for pollution so there are no identified direct or indirect effects.**	**N**
Lough Funshinagh SAC (000611)	Turloughs [3180] Rivers with muddy banks with Chenopodion rubri p.p. and Bidention p.p. vegetation [3270]	**10.5km**	**No pathways identified – it is not within the hydraulic catchment of the development site.**	**N**
Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC (000576)	Alkaline fens [7230] Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]	**10.5km**	**No hydraulic pathways identified. Too far for a snail to crawl to any part of the development site. No effects anticipated.**	**N**
Kileglan Grassland SAC (002214)	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	**11 km**	**No pathways for significant effect identified.**	**N**
Lough Croan Turlough SAC (000610)	Turloughs [3180]	**12km**	**No hydraulic pathways. No potential for significant effect identified.**	**N**
Lough Croan Turlough SPA (004139)	Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]	**12km**	**The site is not suitable habitat for QI species and there are no**	**N**

	Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395] Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]		**pathways for pollution so there are no identified direct or indirect effects.**	
Carn Park Bog SAC (002336)	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	**12km**	**Not in hydraulic continuity with area for proposed development. No significant effect identified.**	**N**
River Suck Callows SPA (004097)	Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395] Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	**12.5km**	**None of the habitats on site are suitable for the QI species and there are no pathways for pollution or direct or indirect effects.**	**N**

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone <u>or</u> in combination) on European Sites **AA Screening matrix**		
Site name **Qualifying interests**	**Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site***	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Shannon River Callows SAC (site code 000216) Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Direct: Works may impact on possible otter holts Indirect: Noise and disruption during construction.	Direct disturbance during works on either side of watercourses. Potential impacts on otter movements along the watercourse due to noise and general disturbance.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	

	Impacts	Effects
Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096). Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] Corncrake (Crex crex) [A122] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	**Direct** None identified **Indirect** **None of the species are known to habituate the lands, but some indirect impacts could occur during the construction works.**	**No direct effects anticipated**
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Yes	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Lough Ree SAC (000440) Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (*	**Direct:** Works may impact on possible otter holts **Indirect:** Noise and disruption during construction.	Direct disturbance during works on either side of watercourses. Potential impacts on otter movements along the watercourse due to noise and general disturbance

important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Bog woodland [91D0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone) Yes	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Lough Ree SPA (004064) Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004] Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053] Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]	**Direct** None identified **Indirect** **None of the species are known to habituate the lands, but some indirect impacts could occur during the construction works.**	No direct effects identified. Some indirect effects possible due to habitat loss and disturbance during the works.

Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065] Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067] Coot (Fulica atra) [A125] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y/N	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	

* Where a restore objective applies it is necessary to consider whether the project might compromise the objective of restoration or make restoration more difficult.

Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

It is not possible to exclude the possibility that proposed development alone would result significant effects on the four identified European sites above – specifically the potential impact on possible otter holts in the vicinity of the main river crossing, and possible impacts on QI bird species during construction activities – although no QI birds were identified on the main sites to be affected.

An appropriate assessment is required on the basis of the possible effects of the project 'alone'. Further assessment in-combination with other plans and projects is not required at screening stage.

Proceed to AA.

Screening Determination

Significant effects cannot be excluded

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that it is not possible to exclude that the proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects will give rise to significant effects on European sites Shannon River Callows SAC (000216, Middle Shannon Callows SPA (004096), Lough Ree SAC (000440) and Lough Ree SPA (004064) in view of the sites conservation objectives. Appropriate Assessment is required.

This determination is based on:

• The possible location of otter holts on the River Cross near the HDD works;

• The possibility of indirect effects on water quality and the disturbance of habitat close to the proposed works during construction activities.

Appropriate Assessment

The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, sections177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section.

Taking account of the preceding screening determination, the following is an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development of a 110kV substation and grid connection west of Athlone, Co. Roscommon. in view of the relevant conservation objectives of **Shannon River Callows SAC (000216, Middle Shannon Callows SPA (004096), Lough Ree SAC (000440)** and **Lough Ree SPA (004064)** based on scientific information provided by the applicant and related submissions.

The information relied upon includes the following:

- Natura Impact Statement prepared by MKO.
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan prepared by MKO.

I am satisfied that the information provided is adequate to allow for Appropriate Assessment. I am satisfied that all aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are considered and assessed in the NIS and mitigation measures designed

to avoid or reduce any adverse effects on site integrity are included and assessed for effectiveness.

Submissions/observations

DAU noted presence of Otter at Cross River. The DAU made general comments about the potential impact on watercourses during cable laying activities.

NAME OF SAC/ SPA (SITE CODE): Shannon River Callows SAC site code 000216 **Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects:** **(i) Deterioration in water quality during construction phase)** **(ii) Deterioration of groundwater during HDD Works**				
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures** **(summary)**	
Molina Meadows	**Maintain the favourable conservation condition**	**No adverse impacts.**		
Lowland hay meadows	**To maintain the favourable conservation conditions**	**No adverse impacts**		
Alkaline fen	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Possible impacts from downstream run-off.**	**Standard water protection measures as set out in CEMP. Use of HDD to ensure no direct works on the main watercourse.**	
Limestone pavement	**To maintain favourable conservation status**	**No adverse impacts**		

Alluvial Forests	**To maintain favourable conservation status**	**Some possible indirect impacts.**	**Construction management measures as set out in the CEMP and NIS.**	
Otter	**To maintain favourable conservation status**	**Possible impact on holt near HDD site.**	**Set out in detail in Section 3.1.2.1 of the NIS.**	

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests. There are no QI habitats close to the site, with the only significant impacts being minor indirect impacts during construction works. Otters are possibly using the Cross River, and appropriate measures to identify any holt and ensure there is no interference with otters using the river for feeding or commuting are set out in the NIS.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects view of conservation objectives

The potential for adverse effects is at worst case construction impacts resulting in some water quality deterioration and, if there are inadequate controls, disturbance to a nearby otter holt.

(i) Water quality degradation

Potential impacts on water quality from run-off via the two water courses was identified.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures to ensure that no contaminated water (ground or surface) shall be allowed without running through silt traps and other measures to prevent suspended solids reaching the bay. In addition, standard control measures are set out to ensure no fuels, oil, or other materials can contaminated adjoining watercourses or groundwater.	
In-combination effects I am satisfied that in-combination effects with plans and projects that could act in combination with the proposed development are detailed and assessed.	

NAME OF SAC/ SPA (SITE CODE): Lough Ree SAC, 000440 Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage): • There is no hydrological link between the waters and the SAC, but there is potential groundwater link. • The otter is a qualifying species and there are potential adverse effects on otters close to the site that may be associated with the SAC.			
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures (summary)**
Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Bog woodland [91D0]	**Maintain the favourable conservation condition off the range of habitats.**	**Impact on water quality during construction. None of the water habitats (i.e. the eutrophic lakes and bogs/fens/ are directly downstream, but may be connected by way of groundwater. No potential adverse effects identified for any of the terrestrial or water habitats.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters and specific controls for the HDD works on either side of both watercourses, as set out in the NIS.** **Standard mitigation measures for**

Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] **Lutra lutra (otter)**			**construction works close to surface waters. – set out in section 6.2.1.1 of the NIS**
Otter	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of otter in Lough Ree SAC**	**Impact on water quality during construction.**	
		Impact on water quality during construction.	

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests. The works will have a minimal impact on local rivers and stream as any direct interference will be very localised and minor in nature It is anticipated that impacts during construction can be mitigated by way of standard control measures. There is some loss of natural grassland in the BESS/transformer station, but drainage controls in this element will ensure any impacts on local hydrology, and hence ecology, will be broadly neutral.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects view of conservation objectives

The potential for adverse effects is at worst case construction impacts resulting in some water quality deterioration in the two watercourses crossed by the line. Construction activities have the potential to have adverse impacts on the otter, one of the qualifying interests of the SAC.

(i) Water quality degradation

Potential impacts on water quality from run-off to the Shannon Bay was identified.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures to ensure that no contaminated water (ground or surface) shall be allowed without running through silt traps and other measures to prevent suspended solids reaching the main watercourses or groundwater. In addition, standard control measures are set out to ensure no fuels, oil, or other materials can contaminated adjoining watercourses or groundwater.

(ii) Direct impact on otter

There is some identified potential for disturbance of a possible otter holt, this can be addressed by way of pre-construction surveys and appropriate construction measures.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures set out in Section 8.1 address measures to ensure that there is no off-site migration of roots or seeds from identified invasive species on and around the site.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects with plans and projects that could act in combination with the proposed development are detailed and assessed

NAME OF SAC/ SPA (SITE CODE): Middle Shannon Callows SPA Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage): (i) Deterioration in water quality during construction phase)			
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures** **(summary)**
Whooper Swan	**Maintain the favourable conservation condition**	**SPA is some 3.5km from the site. The lands are not suitable for foraging. Some deterioration of the water quality could take place – to be mitigated by way of standard measures.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Wigeon	**To maintain the favourable conservation conditions**	**Impact on water quality during construction. The lands are not otherwise suitable foraging habitat.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Corncrake	**To maintain the favourable**	**The lands are not suitable foraging habitat. Impact on water quality during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters of the NIS**

	conservation condition.		
Golden Plover	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**The lands are outside the core foraging range of the species. Possible impacts through water pollution downriver during construction**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Lapwing	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**The lands are sufficient distance from the core foraging habitat of lapwing that the direct loss of grassland will not be significant. Some possible downstream effects from construction pollution if not mitigated.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Black-tailed Godwit	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**There are sufficient foraging areas between the core habitats in the SPA to ensure no direct effects. Possible downstream effects from pollution during construction**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Black headed gull	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**This site is not associated with arable land and so would not be affected by the direct works. Possible impacts from downstream pollution.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**
Wetlands	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetlands**	**The wetlands are some 3.3km downstream. Minor possible effects from construction run-off.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters. – set out in the NIS**

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests. The long term impacts will be neutral as there will be no impact on run-off. Minor possible downstream construction effects can be eliminated through standard CEMP measures and the mitigation measures set out in the NIS.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects view of conservation objectives

The potential for adverse effects is at worst case construction impacts resulting in some water quality deterioration. This would be via adjoining watercourses discharging to the Bay.

(i) Water quality degradation

Potential impacts on water quality from run-off via the Victoria Stream to Kilkee Bay was identified.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures to ensure that no contaminated water (ground or surface) shall be allowed without running through silt traps and other measures to prevent suspended solids reaching the bay. In addition, standard control measures are set out to ensure no fuels, oil, or other materials can contaminated adjoining watercourses or groundwater.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures set out address measures to ensure that there is no off-site migration of roots or seeds from identified invasive species on and around the site.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects with plans and projects that could act in combination with the proposed development are detailed and assessed.

NAME OF SAC/ SPA (SITE CODE): Lough Ree SPA 004064 Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage): (i) Deterioration in water quality during construction phase. While the site is largely downstream of Lough Ree, there is some potential source-pathway-links at the southern end of the lake.			
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures** **(summary)**
Little Grebe	**Maintain the favourable conservation condition**	**There are sufficient foraging areas between the core habitats in the SPA to ensure no direct effects. Possible downstream effects from pollution during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.** **Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Whooper Swan	**To maintain the favourable conservation conditions**	**SPA is more than 3.5km from the site. The lands are not suitable for foraging. Some deterioration of the water quality could take place – to be mitigated by way of standard measures.**	

Wigeon	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Species feeds on coastal seagrass and algae and also cereals. Due to the distance from the SPA there is no direct impact on foraging. Possible downstream effects from pollution during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Teal	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Teal feeds on small seeds and molluscs. No teal identified on or near the site and there is sufficient distance to ensure no possible effects on foraging. Possible downstream effects on Lough Ree from run-off during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Mallard	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**One mallard identified near the site. It is not considered important foraging or nesting habitat. Impacts possible from run-off during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Shoveler	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**No suitable habitat around the site. Possible downstream impacts during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**

Tufted Duck	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters and to minimise the removal of vegetation.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Common Scoter	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Species feeds on water plants and crustaceans. Due to the distance from the SPA there is no direct impact on foraging. Possible downstream effects from pollution during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Goldeneye	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Species feeds on water plants and small fish/crustaceans. Due to the distance from the SPA there is no direct impact on foraging. Possible downstream effects from pollution during construction.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Coot	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Species feeds on shoots and seeds and fish. Due to the distance from the SPA there is no direct impact on foraging. Possible**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**

		downstream effects from pollution during construction.	
Golden Plover	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**The core foraging area is over 3km from the site – it is outside the core foraging area so no direct effects, but possible downstream effects on water quality.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Lapwing	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**Feeds within farmland. The vegetation removal works have the potential to reduce foraging habitat, but given the distance from the SPA, this impact is negligible.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Common Tern	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition.**	**This species feeds on fish. No direct effects, but possible downstream effects from construction run-off.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**
Wetlands	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat of Lough Ree as a resource for migratory waterbirds.**	**The site is 1.3km overland from the closest part of the development site. Potential source-pathway-receptor links have been identified from water run=off.**	**Standard mitigation measures for construction works close to surface waters.**

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests. There is sufficient distance from the site that there are no significant effects likely from direct loss of habitat or foraging on any of the QI species. There is an identified source-pathway-effect by way of contaminated water run-off, but standard construction mitigation will remove any possible impact.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects view of conservation objectives

The potential for adverse effects is at worst case construction impacts resulting in some water quality deterioration. This would be via adjoining watercourses discharging to the Bay.

(i) Water quality degradation

Potential impacts on water quality from construction works.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures to ensure that no contaminated water (ground or surface) shall be allowed without running through silt traps and other measures to prevent suspended solids reaching the bay. In addition, standard control measures are set out to ensure no fuels, oil, or other materials can contaminated adjoining watercourses or groundwater.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Standard measures set out in Section 6.1 of the NIS address measures to ensure that there is no off-site migration of roots or seeds from identified invasive species on and around the site.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects with plans and projects that could act in combination with the proposed development are detailed and assessed.

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Kilkee Reefs SAC site code 002264 in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of s.177U was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, all associated material submitted and taking account all observations, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Rivers Shannon Callows SAC, Middle Callows SPA, Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of all construction, operational and maintenance impacts, specifically those that could result in a deterioration of water quality along the coast.
- the proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives The Rivers Shannon Callows, SAC, Lough Ree SAC, Middle Callows SPA and Lough Ree SPA.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed and the adoption of the CEMP

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	**ABP-322045-25**	**Townland, address**	Monksland, Co. Roscommon.
Description of project		Construction of a 110kV substation and electrical connection to the national grid.	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		Substation/BESS site on a rural field (grazing land), with underground grid connecting running across rural tracks, farmland, industrial estate, and suburban feeder roads. Two HDD crossings (motorway and river).	
Proposed surface water details		Soakage with SUDS principles	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		None required	
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues		Not applicable	

Others?	Not applicable

Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection						
Identified water body	**Distance to (m)**	**Water body name(s) (code)**	**WFD Status**	**Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk**	**Identified pressures on that water body**	**Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)**
River Waterbody	0km	Cross River (Roscollon_30	Moderate	At risk	Agriculture	Cable crosses using HDD (no direct impact on watercourse), crossing of drain, plus proximity to BESS/transformer

Groundwater waterbody		Underlying site	Industrial facility IE_SH_G_018	Good	Review	Not stated	Poorly productive bedrock
		Underlying site (western part of cable)	Funshinagh IE_SH_G_091	Good	Not at risk	Not stated	Cabling runs through a shallow cutting.
Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.							
CONSTRUCTION PHASE							
No.	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	**Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.**
1.	Surface	Bevally Stream_20	None	None	None	No	Screened out
2.	Surface	Bevally Stream_30	None	None	None	No	Screened out

3.	Ground	0020	Drainage	Hydrocarbon Spillages	Standard Construction Measures / Conditions	No	Screened out
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
3.	Surface	0010	None	None	None	No	Screened out
4.	Ground	0020	None	None	None	No	Screened out
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
5.	NA						

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT					
Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives – Template					
Surface Water					
Development/Activity e.g. culvert, bridge, other crossing, diversion, outfall, etc	**Objective 1:Surface Water** **Prevent deterioration of the status of all bodies of surface water**	**Objective 2:Surface Water** **Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of surface water with aim of achieving good status**	**Objective 3:Surface Water** **Protect and enhance all artificial and heavily modified bodies of water with aim of achieving good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status**	**Objective 4: Surface Water** **Progressively reduce pollution from priority substances and cease or phase out emission, discharges and losses of priority substances**	**Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4? (if answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)**
	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 1:	**Describe mitigation required to meet objective 2:**	**Describe mitigation required to meet objective 3:**	**Describe mitigation required to meet objective 4:**	**Y**
Development Activity: Construction of BESS/transformer and crossing of drain	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Use of Suds criteria and appropriate in-site drainage to prevent run-off from the station.	Standard mitigation measures in stream crossing.	No impacts from operation. Standard protection during works.	Y

Development Activity 2: Laying cables	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Y
Development/Activity 3 HUDD crossing	Shallow drilling and ensuring no direct contact with watercourse or watercourse edges.	None required	None required	Standard best practice protection measures during works.	Y
Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives – Template					
Groundwater					
Development/Activity e.g. abstraction, outfall, etc.	**<u>Objective 1: Groundwater</u> Prevent or limit the input of pollutants into groundwater and to prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater**	**<u>Objective 2 : Groundwater</u> Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of groundwater, ensure a balance between abstraction and recharge, with the aim of achieving good status***	**<u>Objective 3:Groundwater</u> Reverse any significant and sustained upward trend in the concentration of any pollutant resulting from the impact of human activity**	**Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4? (if answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)**	
Construction of BESS/Transformer	No special measures required	No special measures required.	Ny special measures required		
Development Activity 1: Cable laying	No special measures required	No special measures required	No special measures required	N/A	
Development Activity 2 HDD drilling	No special measures required	No special measures required	No special measures required	N/A	