



Development

10 year planning permission for an underground electricity interconnector cable and all associated site works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared and will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the application.

Location

Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork

Planning Authority

Cork County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

255141

Applicant(s)

Lysaghtstown Solar Farm 2 Limited

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Grant Permission + Conditions

Type of Appeal

Third Party Normal Planning Appeal

Appellant(s)

Tony Mulcahy

Eilis Walsh

Observer(s)

Tony and Kathleen O'Reilly

David and Niamh Walsh

Uisce Éireann

Daniel & Mairead O'Connell

Eilis Walsh
Deccie Lucey

Date of Site Inspection

9th April 2026

Inspector

Matthew McRedmond

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site which covers a distance of 4.3km, is in the townlands of Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown. 4km to the north-west of Midleton. The site comprises a 4.3km long strip of land connecting the permitted Ballynaclashy Solar Farm with the existing Lysaghtstown Solar Farm. The general area is characterised by agricultural land, public roads with one off housing along the local road network, with mature hedgerows delineating the field and roadside boundaries.
- 1.2. The lands and road network proposed to facilitate the proposal are relatively level rising slightly from south to north. Notable features in the area include Coillte's Curragh Wood recreational area and the existing Lysaghtstown Solar Farm. The roadside boundary is largely delineated with a mature hedgerow and trees, where in places the hedgerow is low. Intermittent dwellings are located along the proposed route of the underground cable, along the rural road network.
- 1.3. The proposed grid connection route leaves the permitted Ballynaclashy Solar Farm in a northward direction before joining the L-7694 underground. After directing south along the L-7694, the route enters private lands to the north and east of the Tomasheen Bridge, before joining the R626 road. Leaving the R626 the route moves in a south westerly direction through private agricultural land to cross the L-3617 and continuing to the Glounamuck Stream. Beyond the stream the cable continues through agricultural land before joining the route of the L-7634 local road where it travels north for a distance of approximately 160m before turning west into the main entrance of Lysaghtstown Solar Farm to connect with the permitted substation at this location.
- 1.4. Agricultural land and artificial surfaces which includes tarmac substrate is the dominant habitat along the proposed grid connection route. The local road serving the lands in the vicinity is generally approximately 4 metres wide and was noted to be lightly trafficked on day of inspection.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1.1. The proposed development is for a 10 year permission and consists of the following:

- 4.3km underground interconnector, which is a 33Kv double circuit cable,
- Excavated trench of 0.82m in width and 1.16m in depth for complete length,
- River crossings by means of horizontal underground drill (Leamlara River) and dam and flume methodology (Glounamuck Stream)
- Underground ducting,
- Joint bays,
- Communication chambers and all associated site development and reinstatement works.

2.1.2. The proposed development will connect the Ballynaclashy and Lysaghtstown Solar Farms and will traverse agricultural fields and the public roads L7694, L-7634, L-36172 and R626, which requires traffic management measures to reduce disruptions during construction.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

3.1.1. Cork County Council granted permission for the proposed development on the 30th October 2025 subject to 32 no. conditions. Of note are the following:

- Condition 1 (C1b): Period for which the development may be carried out is 10 years from grant of permission.
- C17: All works within watercourse to be monitored by the Site Construction and Environmental Compliance officer to ensure no silt/sediment run off.
- C20: Record of all complaints and company response to be kept and made available for inspection by the PA.
- C29: All works to be supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The Local Authority Planner had regard to the locational context of the site, national and local planning policy context, the referral responses received, and any submissions made on the application. Their assessment included the following:

- The proposal is consistent with Objective ET 13-21 (c) of the Development Plan to facilitate infrastructure connections.
- The planning history and context for permitted solar farms in the area and requirement for interconnection were noted.
- There is not anticipated to be any visual impact associated with this underground cable, with the Ring Main Units (RMU's) set back 90m from the public road and behind an agricultural shed.
- Pre-condition survey of roads to be undertaken and repeated post construction.
- Vibration monitoring and building inspections to be undertaken on properties in vicinity of L7964 – Issue of property damage is noted as being outside the planning process.
- Noted that under previous application, the PA Archaeologist was satisfied with the proposal subject to conditions.
- Construction methodology and working hours are noted. An ecological clerk of works will be present for stream crossing works.
- The proposed development is not considered to have an adverse impact on site drainage. Subject to appropriate management, stream works are not anticipated to impact water quality in the river.
- Notes that Council Ecologist is satisfied that the proposal will not impact on local biodiversity/ecology due to compensatory planting and subject to a detailed final landscape plan. No impacts on European Sites.
- Further information was recommended in relation to noise impacts, with an assessment requested from the applicant.
- Senior Executive Planner's Report supports the findings and recommendations of the Area Planner's Report.

Further Information Response

3.2.2. The applicant submitted a further information response in September 2025, which included the following:

- Noise Impact Assessment indicating proposal will comply with best practice noise attenuation measures during construction. No impacts during operation.
- Map drawing showing distances to noise sensitive receptors.

Planning Authority Response

3.2.3. The Local Authority Planner was satisfied with the information submitted by the applicant at further information stage and recommended a grant of permission subject to conditions.

3.2.4. Other Technical Reports

- Area Engineer – Recommends permission subject to conditions.
- Ecology – No objection subject to conditions.
- Environment (waste/water) – No objection subject to conditions.
- Environment (noise) – Recommends noise assessment be obtained through FI. This report was provided by the applicant and considered acceptable.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) – No objections subject to conditions in relation to surface water management and in-water works.

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

3.4.1. A number of third-party submissions were received by the PA in relation to the subject proposal, which may be taken as summarised in the PA Planner's Report. The main issues are as follows:

- Potential impacts on structural stability of dwellings and boundary walls during construction.
- Road closures have potential to cause significant impacts on access to properties and agricultural land on what are already constrained road widths that accommodate small volumes of local access and agricultural traffic.

Emergency response plan required for high risk incidents at these electrical sites. Absence of community consultation in relation to traffic concerns is a significant issue. L-36172 is particularly unsuited to regular construction traffic due to road widths available.

- Potential impacts on environment and ecology including tree roots. Ecological Impact assessment required. Direct Hydrological link to European sites that needs to be fully assessed with no lacunae or scientific doubt with regard to conclusions.
- Proposal may significantly impact on rural landscape due to overground elements such as ring units and substation interfaces. Visual Impact assessment required.
- Inadequate community consultation undertaken.
- Piecemeal nature of application process undermines integrity of planning oversight for such projects. Proposal must be considered alongside other large scale projects in the area.
- Human health concerns due to construction impacts as well as exposure to electro magnetic fields associated with high voltage cables.
- Flood risk concerns in the area at Midleton that may be worsened by the proposal.
- No appropriate mitigation of noise proposed.
- Inappropriate development of agricultural land.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1. 18/6769 – permission granted for a solar farm on a 56.7 hectare site to the south of Curragh Woods (Lysaghtstown Solar Farm).
- 4.2. 20/6891 – permission granted for changes to a subset of the above solar farm arising from the proposed 110kV substation to be provided, resulting in a reduction in the extent of area covered by solar arrays by 1.8 hectares.

- 4.3. 19/5729 – permission granted for a solar farm on a 56.1 hectare site to the west and south of Curragh Woods (west of the above permitted solar farm (Ref. 18/6769, 20/6891)). It is to connect with and represent an extension to the above permitted solar farm.
- 4.4. 19/6882 – permission granted for a solar farm on a 39.7 hectare site in an area between the above permitted solar farms and south of Curragh Woods. It is to connect with and represent an extension to the above permitted solar farm.
- 4.5. ABP Ref. VA04.308979 - permission granted for 110kV electricity substation to connect to and serve a solar farm, associated loop-in infrastructure and all ancillary works at Lysaghtstown, Midleton, Co. Cork.
- 4.6. 21/5089 – Previous interconnector application (2no. 33kv cables) that included part of the currently proposed route that overlaps with this permitted routing (Glenamouck stream crossing and removal of trees was permitted under this application). Cork County Council granted permission in October 2021.
- 4.7. 21/4050 (ABP Ref. 311238-21) – Permission granted for a 220,100sqm of solar panels and all associated site works at Ballynaclashy Solar Farm to the north of Curragh Woods.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. European Policy

2030 Climate and Energy Framework (October 2014)

The European Council endorsed EU-wide binding targets for 2021 to 2030 of 1) at least 40% less greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 and 2) at least 27% renewable energy consumption in 2030.

Regulation (EU) 2018/842

Ireland's binding greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2030 in relation to 2005 levels is 30%, to comply with commitments under the Paris Agreement.

European Green Deal 2020

It aims to make Europe climate neutral by 2050, by doubling the share of renewable energy in the energy mix by 2030, compared to 2020, to reach at least 40%.

REPowerEU Plan 2022 & Directive EU 2018/2001 (REDII) (amended 18.05.2022)

The REPowerEU Plan amended the RED II Directive, to require that 42.5% of energy is from renewable sources by 2030.

RED III (European Renewable Energy Directive (EU/2023/2413))

RED III sets a binding renewable energy target that by 2030, at least 42.5% of energy will come from renewable sources, but aims for 45%, significantly raising the previous 32% target in RED II and the EU's 2030 Climate and Energy Framework.

5.2. National Policy

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework, 2018 (updated April 2025)

- 5.2.1. National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) No 8 'Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society', states Ireland will have a more renewables-focused energy generation system harnessing energy sources such as solar and refers to greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act and the Climate Action Plan 2024. It also states that the accelerated delivery of additional renewable electricity generation is therefore essential for Ireland to meet its climate targets, reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, and improve its energy security by reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and diversifying its electricity supply. Overall, it is a green energy objective to deliver 80% of our electricity needs from renewable sources by 2030.
- 5.2.2. Chapter 9 'Climate Transition and Our Environment' states that the Framework can support the response to climate change through a variety of measures including through the accelerated roll out of on-shore wind energy and solar development. Under the heading of 'Renewable Electricity' the 'Government has set ambitious targets to achieve 8 GW of solar by 2030'
- 5.2.3. 'Rural Areas and Energy Production' states that 'Development of renewable energy generation can include co-location with agricultural activities that supports both a reduction in carbon emissions and land use diversification options for farmers'.
- 5.2.4. 'Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations' for the southern region notes that 138MW of solar had been energised in 2023 with an additional capacity allocation of 3,302MW out to 2020. These targets form part of NPO 74 and are required to be planned for through the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Landscape

The following National Policy Objective are relevant to the appeal:

- National Policy Objective 23 - Protect and promote the sense of place and culture and the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish rural landscape ...
- National Policy Objective 70 (formerly NPO 55) seeks to 'promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a climate neutral economy by 2050'.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2015 (as amended)

The Act provides for the approval of plans by the Government in relation to climate change for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. It introduced five-year carbon budgets starting in 2021. The first two budgets commit Ireland to reducing emissions by 51% over a 12-year period to the 31st of December 2030. It also established sectoral emissions ceilings compared to 1990 levels, and a net zero target for 2050. Section 15 (1) (as amended) provides that:

- A relevant body (a public body) shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with —
- The most recent approved:
 - a) climate action plan,
 - b) national long term climate action strategy,
 - c) national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,
 - d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and
 - e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP 2024)

Sector emission ceilings approved by Government in July 2022 requires a 75% reduction in electricity emissions by 2030, based on 2018 levels. Central to achieving

this goal is an increase in the share of renewable electricity to 80%, largely from solar and wind. Key ‘Electricity’ targets include delivery of up to 5 GW of Solar by 2025 and 8 GW by 2030. Large-scale deployment of renewables will be critical to decarbonising the power sector, and enabling electrification of other technologies.

Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP 2025)

CAP 2025 refines and updates measures and actions required from 2024 and is to be read in conjunction with CAP 2024. Chapter 11 addresses Electricity and states that the 22% reduction in emissions from 2021 to 2023 in the electricity sector is due to an increase in the share of renewable electricity generation. 7% of electricity generated in 2023 came from renewable sources other than wind, such as solar, hydro, and biomass. National electricity generation targets remain the delivery of 5 GW of Solar by 2025 and 8 GW by 2030. These targets are seen as minimums.

National Energy & Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NCEP) (July 2024)

The objectives for decarbonisation from renewable energy include 1) achieving a 34% share of renewable energy in energy consumption by 2030; 2) increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%; and 3) Up to 1.5 GW of grid scale solar energy. This will be achieved through policies including streamline consenting and connection arrangements.

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023-2030

Includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing existing challenges and new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss. Section 59B(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Commission to have regard to the objectives and targets of the NBAP in the performance of its functions, to the extent that they may affect or relate to the functions of the Commission.

5.3. Regional Policy Context

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

Chapter 5 ‘Environment’ includes the following Regional Policy Objectives:

- RPO 87 – Low Carbon Energy Future – It is an objective to...increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply...

- RPO 95 – Sustainable Renewable Energy Generation – ... to leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.
- RPO 96 – Integrating Renewable Energy Sources – ... ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.
- RPO 100 – Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection – It is an objective to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production...

Section 8.2 includes the following Regional Policy Objectives:

- RPO 219 – ‘New Energy Infrastructure’ – It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.
- RPO 221 – ‘Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Network’ – a) Local Authority City and County Development Plans shall support the sustainable development of renewable energy generation... c) The RSES supports the Southern Region as a Carbon Neutral Energy Region.

5.4. Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028

5.4.1. The site is located within a ‘High Value Landscape’ and is partially located (section south of Curragh Wood) within the ‘Prominent and Strategic Metropolitan Greenbelt (MGB) Areas’ as shown on Maps 4.2 and 4.3 of the Development Plan.

5.4.2. Objective GI 14-9 relates to Landscape and states the following:

“a) Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork’s built and natural environment.

b) Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land-use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.

- c) *Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.*
- d) *Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.*
- e) *Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.”*

5.4.3. Objective GI 14-16 refers to Prominent and Strategic Metropolitan Greenbelt Map and states the following:

“Protect those prominent open hilltops, valley sides and ridges that define the character of the Metropolitan Cork Greenbelt and those areas which form strategic, largely undeveloped gaps between the main Greenbelt settlements. These areas are shown on the Prominent and Strategic Metropolitan Greenbelt(Figure 14-3) and it is an objective to preserve them from development.”

5.4.4. Policy Objective ET 13-21: Supports the facilitation of infrastructure connections to solar farms and other renewable energy sources. The following is stated:

- a) *Support and facilitate the sustainable development, upgrade and expansion of the electricity transmission grid, storage, and distribution network infrastructure.*
- b) *Support the sustainable development of the grid including strategic energy corridors and distribution networks in the region to international standards.*
- c) *Facilitate where practical and feasible, infrastructure connections to wind farms, solar farms, and other renewable energy sources subject to normal proper planning considerations.*
- d) *Proposals for development which would be likely to have a significant effect on nature conservation-sites and/or habitats or species of high conservation value will only be approved if it can be ascertained, by means of an Appropriate Assessment or other ecological assessment, that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected.*

5.4.5. Section 13.16.3 states: ‘The siting of overhead power lines can have a significant impact on visual character of an area. Proposals for connections to renewable energy developments should where practicable be fully assessed as part of the renewable energy application.’ The objective goes on to say that underground technology should be considered in areas of special sensitivity.

- 5.4.6. Objective ET 13-22 relates to 'Transmission Network' and states the following:
- b) Proposals for new electricity transmission networks will need to consider the feasibility of undergrounding or the use of alternative routes especially in landscape character areas that have been evaluated as being of high landscape sensitivity. This is to ensure that the provision of new transmission networks can be managed in terms of their physical and visual impact on both the natural and built environment and the conservation value of European sites. c) Proposals for development which would be likely to have a significant effect on nature conservation-sites and/or habitats or species of high conservation value will only be approved if it can be ascertained, by means of an Appropriate Assessment or other ecological assessment, that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected.*

Objective 15-6 – Biodiversity and New Development, provides for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the development management process. Parts b and c are particularly relevant:

- b) Encouraging the retention and integration of existing trees, hedgerows and other features of high natural value within new developments;*
- c) Requiring the incorporation of primarily native tree and other plant species, particularly pollinator friendly species in the landscaping of new developments;*

5.5. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.5.1. Cork Harbour SPA (site code 4030) and Great Island Channel SAC (site code 1058) are located c.3.5km to the south of the site.
- 5.5.2. I note for the purposes of issues raised in the appeal that Ballynaclashy House pNHA (Site code 000099) is located 10m north of the proposed route as it follows underneath the L-7694 road in the northern section of the proposed route.

6.0 EIA Screening

- 6.1.1. The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed

development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development is not a class of development that falls within the definitions of either Part 1 or Part 2 or part 2 of schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

7.1.1. 2no. third party appeals have been submitted against the decision of Cork County Council to grant permission for the proposed development.

7.1.2. The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The proposal will connect with and represents an extension to the solar farm permitted under refs. 18/6769, 19/5729 and 19/6882 (Lysaghtstown solar farm). Project splitting. Cumulatively the development would be large scale.
- Lack of public consultation as to the scale of the overall development.
- Impacts on local roads is unacceptable due to narrow width and access requirements. Emergency vehicle access is also a concern.
- Noise and air pollution from proposed development is a significant concern. A full Environmental Impact Assessment should be undertaken, particularly for the impacts on local wildlife.
- Concerns in relation to electromagnetic radiation from the proposed cable.
- The scale is out of proportion in this rural area and would constitute an overbearing non-agricultural feature in the landscape.
- The loss of agricultural land will result in the reclamation of other, marginal lands to bring same into arable production and/or the unsustainable intensification of existing arable lands using fertilisers. The proposed interconnector will connect a sprawling industrial development of solar farms that has not been assessed in totality.

- The agricultural zoning of the land is to provide for agricultural uses.
- Scale and direction of overall development of solar infrastructure at this location has not been transparent and would create an undesirable precedent for further project splitting.
- There is the expectation that further extensions will follow thus altering strategic land use decision making to the detriment of long term agricultural planning in the area.
- The extension sets a precedent for greenfield expansion of solar farms on prime agricultural land rather than encouraging more sustainable brownfield development.
- The Visual Impact Assessment underestimates the visual impact. The interconnector will connect several solar farms that will be highly visible from local road L7694, from dwellings along the road and from Curragh Wood recreational area.
- The Curragh Wood recreational area will be surrounded by solar arrays and would be adversely affected.
- Negative impacts on ecology and wildlife including flying insects and bats. The UK's Bat Conservation Trust has recommended a 1km radius from roosts to protect foraging and commuting habitats. The heat island effect could adversely affect flying insects. As the site is bounded by woodland on multiple sides and higher ground on the opposite side of the woodland the heated air contained laterally will draft upwards.
- It has not been demonstrated that rain water runoff from the site will not increase. Much of the land in the development slopes in an east to west direction such that rainwater will flow unevenly from the south-facing panels with the resulting rivulets scouring the ground underneath. It is therefore incorrect to state that rain falling on the panels would flow evenly. Land grading is employed internationally to adjust gradients to minimise rainwater runoff. Local road L7694 is frequently flooded as a result of runoff with high levels of silt regularly flowing to the nearby Leamlara stream which joins the Owenacurra River upstream of the water supply for Midleton and Cobh.

- Permission from all landowners along the route is required as it forms part of the overall solar array.
- Impacts on protected structures are not quantifiable as setback distances are not provided. Ballynaclashy House and Tomasheen Bridge could be impacted by the proposal.
- It is queried whether the extension would impact on the Celtic Interconnector project.

7.2. Applicant Response

7.2.1. The applicant has provided a response to the third party appeals that may be summarised as follows:

7.2.2. In summary the proposal runs parallel with the Lysaghtstown electricity interconnector permitted under Cork County Council reference 21/5089. The previous appeal by one of the appellants in relation to Ref. 21/4050 (ABP Ref. 311238-21) follows many of the same points as the subject appeal, even though the previous appeal was in relation to the Ballynaclashy Solar farm.

7.2.3. Community Engagement and Nature and Context of Overall Development

- The applicant undertook community engagement and included a document outlining community benefit with their appeal response. Community benefits listed include biodiversity enhancement, community partnerships and stakeholder/corporate sponsorship for local organisations. The RESS community benefit fund is also referenced.
- Direct contacts were provided to residents to discuss emergency access, potential disruptions and use of steel plates for property access. House calls were undertaken and information brochures distributed during the pre-application stages for both Lysaghtstown and Ballynaclashy solar farms.
- Gardai and fire services were consulted.
- Road repairs after flood damage were provided by the applicant.
- The proposal must be considered in light of the climate and energy emergency facing the country. Section 15 of the Climate Act must be complied with in relation to renewable energy.

7.2.4. Land Use Zoning Conflicts

- The proposal represents a form of agricultural diversification in full compliance with Development Plan policies. It is compatible with the continuation of agricultural activities. Sheep will be retained on site for the operational phase of the associated solar farms and the land used for the route of the interconnector will be reinstated.
- 'AG – Agriculture' zoned land has a specific purpose in the development plan to be suitable for later phase residential development, adjacent to established settlements. The subject site is not located within such a zone and therefore not zoned agriculture although the land is in agricultural use.

7.2.5. Cumulative Impacts

- The appeal relates to the visual impact of the permitted solar farms and not the underground cable proposed. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed solar farm and above ground element of the proposal incorporates best practice methodologies.
- The potential for cumulative impacts was addressed. There is a low degree of intervisibility between the proposed and permitted phases which serves to successfully integrate them within the surrounding area. the only visible element of the proposed development is the Ring Main Units, contained within the solar farm land.
- Overall, the development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual impacts in its own right or cumulatively.

7.2.6. Ecology

- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) submitted with the application. Sensitive ecological receptors such as the Leamlara and Glounamuck Streams have been assessed both individually and cumulatively. The net cumulative impact is considered to be positive, due to biodiversity gain in the area of the development sites.
- No significant impacts will arise from the development on the Great Island Channel SAC, Cork Harbour SPA nor the Ballynacalshy House pNHA, which

is noted as not being a protected structure but a potential roosting site for bats. This will not be impacted by the proposal.

7.2.7. Drainage

- No basis to the claim that due to the increased solar development facilitated by the proposal, this will lead to increased flooding.
- The proposed underground cable does not include any impermeable surfaces beyond the existing public road routes proposed and therefore the claim that additional flooding will occur is not supported.

7.2.8. Heritage Impacts

- Submitted archaeological report confirms there will be no impacts on existing heritage features. There will be no impacts on gate lodges at the former Ballyedmond House due to separation distances and stop/go system proposed, including refilling of excavated trenches.
- Ballynaclashy House is not a protected structure as claimed in the appeal and has an ecological designation, with no impacts to this designation identified.

7.2.9. Traffic

- Construction work impacts will be managed and are temporary in nature, expecting to last 44 days. Dedicated contact persons will be provided to mitigate impacts, with small sections of the route done at a time.
- Best construction practices will not restrict access to relevant lands or dwellings in the area. Road opening licences and relevant management measures can be conditioned and were included on the Cork County Council grant of permission.

7.2.10. Noise

- Noise issues responded to in response to FI at application stage. 8no. noise sensitive receptors were assessed and were concluded to comply with best practice standards and measures. Condition 19 of the grant of permission required a further dust and noise management plan.

7.2.11. Environmental Impact Assessment

- The subject proposal does not come within a class of development in Schedule 5 of the Planning and development Regulations (as amended) in relation to a requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment.

7.2.12. **Electro Magnetic Field**

- The strength of electromagnetic field reduces the further you move away from the source, with all electric appliances producing some electromagnetic current as set out in the appeal response. A 110kv cable produces 2.32 μ T of magnetic field, which is well below the recommended public limit of 100 μ T. The proposed 33Kv cable would be substantially below this, showing negligible impacts in relation to electromagnetic exposure.

7.2.13. **Other Issues**

- The appeal references the ‘strategically critical’ nature of the proposal and questioned if the proposal is justified in the context of the Celtic Interconnector. This point was raised in a separate appeal and there is no interaction between the proposal and the Celtic Interconnector.

7.3. **Planning Authority Response**

7.3.1. PA note that all relevant issues were covered in technical reports on the application.

7.4. **Observations**

7.4.1. A number of observations were submitted in relation to the 2no. appeals. The following points were raised:

Traffic

- Narrow roads will be severely impacted by the proposed installation. Access to farms and properties will be reduced.
- Road safety for rural walkers will be compromised.
- Flooding of roads has potential to impact on cable conductivity.
- Access for emergency vehicles is a major concern.

Environmental Impact

- No Environmental Impact Assessment submitted to assess impacts on wildlife, plants and ecosystems. Red Squirrel is known in the area as well as Yello Hammer, Grey Wagtail and stonechat, all of which should be protected.
- Tree impacts should be considered and impacts on root structures.
- Serious noise levels expected along route during installation, particularly due to breaking of ground rock in the area.
- Queried how dust impacts will be managed.

Electromagnetic Radiation

- Electromagnetic Fields along the route should be considered.

Impact on Property Structures

- Proposed construction works have potential to impact on property boundaries due to boring and excavation.
- Impact on road levels could potentially lead to additional water run off.

Protected Structures

- Ballynaclashy House is a protected structure according to the County Development Plan and should be protected during construction. This building is also the site of a bat roost (Whiskered Bats)

Uisce Eireann

- Uisce Eireann made an observation on the appeal recommending standard conditions in relation to interactions with Uisce Eireann infrastructure.

Other Issues

- No consultation or contact from applicant in past 5 years.
- Area is at risk of flooding as evidenced in photos and contrary to claims of applicant.
- Unauthorised location of 12+ mobile homes on the solar farm site is referenced.

8.0 Assessment

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

- Procedural Issues
- Policy Context
- Traffic
- Drainage
- Ecology
- Noise
- Heritage Impacts
- Other Issues

8.2. Procedural Issues

Project Splitting

- 8.2.1. With regard had to the nature and extent of the development as proposed, the appeal submits that the proposal will give rise to a proliferation of solar developments in the area.
- 8.2.2. In the public notices and the documentation accompanying the application the proposal is described as an underground cable to connect the already permitted Ballynaclashy Solar Farm (Cork CC Ref. 21/4050, ABP Ref. 311238-21) and the permitted Lysaghtstown Solar Farm (Ref. 18/6769 and as amended under references 20/6891 and 21/5089) that is already constructed. The interconnector will link in with a substation permitted under ABP Ref. 308979-20.
- 8.2.3. As per the appeal response the agent for the applicant stated that the proposed route of the interconnector overlaps with part of the route permitted under the Lysaghtstown Solar Farm permission and previously permitted solar farms were

appropriately assessed, including cumulatively. The proposal itself does not result in additional solar farm development.

- 8.2.4. As noted in section 6.0 above an interconnector cable is not listed as a class of development for the purposes of EIA within the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). Solar farms also do not constitute a class of development for the purposes of EIA. Therefore, an EIAR is not required, and this is addressed in Section 6.0 and in the attached appendices. I note that a similar conclusion has been reached by the Commission (previously the Board) on solar farm developments. Therefore, project splitting to avoid EIA does not arise.
- 8.2.5. I submit that the potential impacts of the overall development, namely the entirety of the solar farm, substation and interconnector cable have been previously assessed under historical planning applications, and I am satisfied that the Commission has the necessary information before it to allow for a complete assessment of impacts for the proposed development.

Public Consultation

- 8.2.6. Whilst concern is expressed as to the level of public consultation in relation to the project, I note that there is no legal imperative for the applicant to engage in discussions prior to lodgement of an application. It is clear that local residents were aware of the application and engaged in the process by making their views known through written submissions to the Planning Authority in the first instance and to the Commission at this appeal stage.

8.3. Policy Context

- 8.3.1. The submitted appeal claims the proposal is unsuitable for agriculturally zoned land.
- 8.3.2. The applicant has responded to say the subject site although in agricultural use, is not zoned as it is removed from any settlement boundary as shown on CDP maps. The applicant also submits that outside of public roads, agricultural land will revert to that use after construction is complete.
- 8.3.3. The proposed development is supported by national, regional and local policies in terms of renewable energy. Objective 70 of the National Planning Framework seeks to promote renewable energy and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment, whilst National Energy & Climate Plan 2021-2030

recognises the need to transition to at least 70% renewable energy. Consequent to same, the Climate Action Plan 2024 and 2025 stresses the importance of the decarbonisation of electricity consumed by harnessing the significant renewable energy resources available. To meet the required level of emissions reduction by 2030 it is required to increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 80% with solar energy comprising of between 1.5-2.5 GW (indicative figure). I consider the subject proposal supports these objectives by providing a connection between permitted solar farms that feed onwards to the electricity network.

- 8.3.4. At a regional level it is an objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region to increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture. At a local level, there is support for solar energy production as a renewable resource. Section 13.8 specifically addresses solar energy in which it states that consideration should be given to locating power lines underground and Objectives ET 13-21 and 13-22 relate to provision of connections to solar generating power and providing the transmission network underground.
- 8.3.5. In relation to agricultural use of the site, I accept the land does not have a specific land use zoning objective, but that any private lands traversed by the proposal, are in agricultural use. I have had regard to the recent high Court judgement of *Greta Connolly V An Coimisiun Pleanala* [2026] IEHC 224, whereby it is acknowledged that the deemed zoning does not do more than recognise the existing use. I am satisfied that these lands can be returned to productive agricultural use after the works period and can identify no issue with an underground cable across the subject lands, subject to compliance with other relevant planning and sustainable development standards and therefore consider there to be no conflict with the existing agricultural use of the land.
- 8.3.6. The proposed development, coupled with the solar farms permitted and to which it is to form a connection, at over c.200 hectares, would constitute a large scale project, however as noted under previous decisions for development at this location, there is nothing in terms of policy context to preclude such development being considered. The proposed development will contribute to Ireland's targets for electricity generation from renewable sources and for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

and I therefore consider the proposed development to be acceptable in principle, subject to consideration of the key planning issues as assessed below.

8.4. Traffic

8.4.1. The appeals and observations have set out that the proposed development will have a significant impact on the operation of the local road network for access to farmland and dwellings and will cause a safety risk.

8.4.2. The applicant has responded to say the construction works will be the only impact period and will be managed in best practice measures to reduce impacts on residents. A point of contact will be made available to avoid disruptions.

Construction Phase

8.4.3. I note the application documents submit a construction period of 4 months and for works to be undertaken simultaneously with the construction of the permitted Ballynaclashy Solar Farm, which has an overall construction period of 6 months. In the submitted first-party appeal response, a conflicting construction period is submitted where it is estimated that the construction period would be in the region of 44 days cumulatively and will be undertaken on a phased basis with only short sections being done at a time. It is estimated that 100m a day would be completed. I note this estimation is more consistent with the submitted construction methodology document submitted at application stage, and a rate of 100m per day is consistent with a 44 day period to complete 4.3km.

8.4.4. It is inevitable that potential negative impacts to the local population may occur during the construction period particularly in terms of noise and traffic. However, these impacts will be short-term temporary. An outline construction and environmental management plan accompanies the application which would be required to be finalised should permission be granted. Appropriate points of contacts and complaints response procedures may also be enforceable through conditions. I am satisfied that given the overall benefits of solar energy provision and the strong policy context that supports such developments, temporary construction impacts are acceptable as they are short term and any single residence would only be temporarily impacted by noise, with overall traffic management measures considered acceptable to manage local access requirements. I consider this could be adequately agreed with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

Operational Phase

8.4.5. As the site of the underground cable will be reinstated post construction and save for occasional inspections/maintenance to and from the associated solar farm, traffic during the operational phase will be minimal and will have no impact.

8.5. Drainage

8.5.1. Parties to the appeal raise concerns as to the potential increase in surface water runoff and impact on the local road network and adjoining lands. Specific reference is made to flooding in the wider vicinity of the site and flooding events in Middleton in 2023.

8.5.2. Outside of a small area of the route being within Flood Zone A in the vicinity of the Leamlara River crossing, I note the majority of the site is not within an area identified as being at risk of flooding, although I am mindful of the photographic evidence of local road flooding as submitted with the appeals and associated observations. The issues raised in relation to flooding present as being primarily related to run off from solar panels, which I consider to have been addressed under separation applications and appeals and which were considered acceptable.

8.5.3. I consider the proposed works for the underground cable will not substantially alter the existing ground conditions as the areas of public roads that will be utilised will be repaved and private agricultural lands will be reinstated with the input of an agricultural contractor, including consultation with the landowners. There will be no new areas of hardstanding, and I am satisfied that the proposed underground cable will not result in additional surface water run off or water drainage issues in the area, nor that the proposed development would be vulnerable to flooding events.

8.5.4. On balance I consider that sufficient detail has been provided with the application to support the view that there would not be material increases in surface water arising and that it can be appropriately disposed within existing arrangements and will not discharge onto the local road or neighbouring lands or properties.

8.6. Ecology Impacts

8.6.1. The third-party appeals and observations to the appeals have suggested that impacts on local wildlife including bats, squirrels, badgers and tree impacts have not been adequately assessed as part of the subject application.

- 8.6.2. The applicant refers to the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and notes assessment of sensitive receptors including watercourses local to the development site. Impacts on ecology are noted by the applicant as neutral imperceptible.
- 8.6.3. I note the contents and conclusions of the submitted EclA and NIS document. I note flora and fauna surveys were undertaken to assess the types of habitats in the vicinity of both solar farms and the underground cable, with surveys of aquatic species, birds and bats also undertaken.
- 8.6.4. The proposed cable will cross the Leamlara Stream underground via horizontal drilling to avoid impacts. The crossing of the Glounamuck Stream involves a dam and flume system, that includes reinstatement of the original condition of the stream following trenching works. I further note the removal and reinstatement of 12m of native hedgerow, which also includes the planting of 6no. native trees to present a biodiversity net gain in relation to these works impacts. This 6no. trees, is noted as being in addition to 10no. new trees proposed and permitted under Ref. 21/5089. Tree protection measures as set out in the Tree/Vegetation protection measures statement will be put in place to avoid any root impacts during construction.
- 8.6.5. I am satisfied that the cumulative impacts of the permitted solar farms at Ballynaclashy and Lysaghtstown, the substation at Lysaghtstown and the interconnector at Lysaghtstown have all been considered in the level of overall impact and adequate mitigation measures including standard construction management measures are put forward by the applicant to mitigate impacts on local ecology. Impacts are confined to the construction phase for the proposed cable, and the route is of local importance with trees and hedge lines and works within an existing watercourse. Supervision of proposed works by an Ecological Clerk of Works and an appropriate Environment Officer can be provided for by way of condition to ensure any impacts are avoided and appropriately mitigated. Given the primarily agricultural fields and public roads to be used for the proposed underground cable route, management of in-stream works and the replacement of any hedgerow to be removed, I am satisfied that that the impacts on the ecology of the site and the wider area would not be significant and would be acceptable in this local context.

8.7. Noise

- 8.7.1. The appeals and observations note the potential for significant noise disturbance as rock breaking and excavation works take place with the proposed development.
- 8.7.2. The applicant submits that the noise impact assessment submitted at FI stage of the application adequately addresses issues of noise and concludes that the proposal will comply with best practice standards. It is further noted that the Cork CC grant of permission recommended the submission of a noise and dust management plan prior to the commencement of development.
- 8.7.3. I note the details of the Noise Impact Assessment submitted and the 8no. noise sensitive locations (NSL) assessed along the route of the proposed underground cable. I am satisfied that the NSL give a fair representation of the most sensitive noise receptors along the proposed route. I note the noise limit criteria as submitted by the applicant is consistent with the baseline noise survey, BS 5228-1 guidance and TII Guidelines on the treatment of noise and vibration in road schemes. I note the recommended daytime limit of 70dB(A) at the façade of dwellings with a 65dB limit noted for Saturdays, which has been submitted as being included in the construction period. I note the 8no. NSL come within the 70dB limit, without mitigation and 2no. exceed the Saturday limit by 2dB and 4dB.
- 8.7.4. I note that selection of machinery, noise screening and monitoring are recommended mitigation measures that may reduce noise levels where appropriate. No operational noise impacts are identified as the cable runs underground.
- 8.7.5. It is inevitable that potential negative impacts to the local population may occur during the construction period particularly in terms of noise and traffic, as previously noted. Construction traffic is not anticipated to increase existing traffic levels to create an additional noise impact. However, I acknowledge there will be impacts, and they will be temporary. The forecast noise levels are a worst case scenario where all construction equipment is operating simultaneously and are mostly within acceptable levels. I note from the submitted construction programme that the build site will move 100m per day, which would suggest localised impacts will not be for any extended period of time so as to cause an unacceptable disruption. Adequate notice periods and active construction management would ameliorate any major impacts, and I consider that a final construction management plan, to include noise management measures would provide an adequate level of protection to allow the development to

proceed without undue disruption to the local population. I further recommend a condition to allow for an appropriate complaints management mechanism so individual landowners and residents are not unduly impacted through localised works.

8.8. Other Issues

- 8.8.1. The appeal and observations note the potential for impacts on heritage buildings including historical boundary walls and Ballynaclashy House. The application is accompanied by an Archaeological and Built Heritage Impact Assessment report. The cable route has been designed to avoid interaction with the Tomasheen Bridge based on feedback from previous, withdrawn applications. The construction methodology has taken account of a pair of gate lodges along the R626. Although located less than 7metres from the planned cable route, construction methods will allow any impacts to be avoided. Ballynaclashy House is listed as a potential Natural Heritage Area due to housing a roost of Whiskered Bats and is not a protected structure as submitted in observations to the appeal. I am satisfied that based on the information submitted and subject to appropriate conditions that the proposed development would not have a material impact on the cultural heritage of the area.
- 8.8.2. The parties to the appeal query whether the cable would impact on the Celtic Interconnector project. The electricity transmission interconnector (Celtic Interconnector) to be constructed onshore in Ireland, would be located nearest to the section of the route along the R626 at a local road eastwards towards Midleton c.1.6 km to the south of the site. I do not consider there to be any interaction between this project and the subject proposal.
- 8.8.3. The issue of impacts on human health is raised in relation to the electro magnetic field of the proposal. I note that health and safety matters are regulated by other codes and should not be additionally regulated by the planning process. Although I do not propose to adjudicate on matters of health and safety, the submitted documentation does include details that a 110kv cable produces 2.32 μ T of magnetic field, which is well below the recommended public limit of 100 μ T. The proposed 33Kv cable would be substantially below this and I note would substantially reduce when removed from the source itself, showing negligible impacts in relation to

electromagnetic exposure as the route runs primarily along private agricultural lands and public roads.

9.0 **AA Screening**

9.1. **Screening Determination**

Significant effects cannot be excluded

9.1.1. 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 will not give rise to significant effects on the Great Island Channel SAC or Cork Harbour SPA European Sites in view of the sites conservation objectives. This is primarily due to the proposed in-stream works at Glenamouck Stream and horizontal drilling under Leamlara River, that has potential connections to the Owencurra River that connects to the above referenced European Sites.

9.1.2. It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) [under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000] of the proposed development is required.

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

9.2.1. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Great Island Channel SAC and/or the Cork Harbour SPA, in view of the conservation objectives of this site and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required.

9.2.2. Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS all associated material submitted and taking into account observations of third parties, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour 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.

9.2.3. My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of construction and operational impacts.

- To maintain and improve the existing water status of adjoining waterbodies including the Glenamouck Stream that feeds into the Owenacourra River that connects to Cork Harbour and the Great Island Channel.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed including standard practice construction mitigation measures, dust management and noise mitigation.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA.

9.2.4. Please refer to the attached appendices for detailed Stage 1 and 2 Appropriate Assessment.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

10.1.1. 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 based on the mitigation measures, drainage arrangements and management of surface water as set out in the proposed development. Please see WFD Assessment attached at Appendix 3 of this report.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1.1. I recommend that permission be GRANTED based on the following reasons and considerations and subject to the following conditions.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

12.1.1. In coming to its decision, the Commission performed its functions in relation to the making of a decision, in a manner consistent with the following:

- (a) the policies and objectives set out in the National Planning Framework and the Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy for the Southern Regional Assembly
- (b) the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

- (c) the provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028,
- (d) the nature, scale, extent and layout of the proposed development,
- (e) the route of the proposed project
- (f) the pattern of existing and permitted development in the area
- (g) the planning history of the site and the surrounding area
- (h) the submissions and observations received, and
- (i) the report of the Inspector,

12.1.2. Subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would be acceptable in terms of landscape and ecological impacts and would not give rise to unacceptable traffic impacts in the area.

12.1.3. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted on the 12th day of June 2025, 24th June 2025 and 5th September 2025 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 the development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interests of clarity.

2. All of the environmental, construction and ecological mitigation measures, as set out in the Ecological Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS) accompanying the application, the Tree/Vegetation Protection Measures Statement submitted to the planning authority on the 12th day of June, 2025 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.

3. The period during which the development hereby permitted may be carried out shall be 10 years from the date of this Order.

Reason: Having regard to the nature of the proposed development, the Board considered it reasonable and appropriate to specify a period of the permission in excess of five years.

4. Noise monitoring shall be carried out at all times during the construction phase of the development.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and public health.

5. Drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. Surface water from the site shall not be permitted to drain onto the adjoining public road or adjoining properties.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and public health.

6. Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall agree details for any crossings above and below Irish Water Assets. The applicant shall ensure that no additional load or force to any Irish Water assets from any preconstruction, post construction or operational phases will result from the proposed development. All detailed designs including separation distances shall be in accordance with Irish Waters Technical Standards, Codes of Practice, Standard Details and other associated Irish Water requirements.

Reason: To protect existing Irish Water Infrastructure.

7. All instream works to be carried out in accordance with the Inland Fisheries Ireland 'Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent waters' and IFI shall be consulted prior to the commencement of works.

Reason: In the interests of environmental and water quality protection.

8. All watercourses in or adjacent to the works area shall be monitored on a daily basis by the Site Construction and Environmental Compliance Officer to ensure they are not being impacted by silt/sediment laden stormwater run-off from the works area. A record of this monitoring shall be maintained on site.

Reason: To protect water quality.

9. A pre-condition survey will be carried out on all public roads and bridges that will be used in connection with the development to record the condition of the public roads in advance of construction commencing. A post-construction survey will also be carried out after the works are completed. The specification and timing of the surveys will be agreed with Cork County Council.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, and of orderly development.

10. All works shall be supervised by an on-site Ecological Clerk of Works who will report on compliance with relevant mitigation measures. The Ecological Clerk of works shall be empowered to halt works where they consider that the continuation of the works is likely to result in a significant pollution or impact on Annex I habitat, and on-site works will cease until authorised to continue by the Planning Authority. A compliance monitoring report shall be prepared by the Ecological Clerk of Works and shall be submitted to the planning authority at the end of the main construction period.

Reason: To protect Biodiversity.

11. (a) Existing field boundaries shall be retained, notwithstanding any exemptions available and new planting undertaken in accordance with the Landscape Plan submitted with the application.
- (b) All landscaping shall be planted to the written satisfaction of the planning authority prior to commencement of development. Any trees or hedgerow that are removed, die or become seriously damaged or diseased during the operative period of the development, shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or hedging of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity, the visual amenities of the area, and the amenities of dwellings in the vicinity.

12. The developer shall facilitate the archaeological monitoring of the site and shall provide for the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features which may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall:

- (a) notify the planning authority in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of any site operation (including hydrological and geotechnical investigations) relating to the proposed development, and
- (b) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist prior to the commencement of development. The archaeologist shall assess the site and monitor all site development works.

The assessment shall address the following issues:

- I. the nature and location of archaeological material on the site, and
- II. the impact of the proposed development on such archaeological material.

A report, containing the results of the assessment, shall be submitted to the planning authority and, arising from this assessment, the developer shall agree in writing with the planning authority details regarding any further archaeological requirements (including, if necessary, archaeological excavation) prior to commencement of construction works. In default of agreement on any of these

requirements, the matter shall be referred to An Coimisiun Pleanála for determination.

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the area and to secure the preservation (in-situ or by record) and protection of any archaeological remains that may exist within the site.

13. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 2000 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: To safeguard amenities of property in the vicinity.

14. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including but not limited to, hours of working, noise and dust management measures, surface water management proposals, the management of construction traffic, and the off-site disposal of construction waste.

Reason: In the interests of public safety, residential amenity and protection of the environment.

15. A tree condition survey will be undertaken by a qualified arboriculturist three years post construction to identify any signs of decline or decay. The arboriculturist will then make recommendations towards further management of trees. A compliance report on this survey, including management recommendations, shall be submitted to the Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect local biodiversity.

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

Reason: To ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site.

17. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or Intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer, or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Coimisiun Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

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

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Matthew McRedmond
Senior Planning Inspector

28th April 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-500343-CK-25
Proposed Development Summary	10 year permission for an underground electricity cable (33kv and 4.3km in length) and all associated site works.
Development Address	Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork
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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 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)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> 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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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?	
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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)	Class 1(a) – field boundary to be removed. Proposal is substantially below the 4km threshold at 12m and hedgerow will be replaced as part of the proposed works.
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 <input type="checkbox"/>	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	PL-500343-CK-25
Proposed Development Summary	10 year permission for an underground electricity cable (33kv and 4.3km in length) and all associated site works.
Development Address	Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork
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).	<p>The site lies within a rural area. Surrounding land uses are a mix of residential, renewable energy and agricultural uses and commercial uses. It is not considered that any significant cumulative environmental impacts will result when considered in cumulation with existing developments as set out in the main body of my report.</p> <p>There are no demolition works involved, and there are no identified risks of accidents or disaster, nor is there any obvious risks to human health that result from the proposed development.</p> <p>The proposed development will not give rise to the production of significant waste, emissions or pollutants.</p>
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to	The proposed development would be in keeping with the renewable energy nature of adjacent developments.

<p>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, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).</p>	<p>The site is not located within any designated site. The closest Natura 2000 sites is the Great Island Channel SAC (site code 001058) and Cork Harbour SPA (004030), located 3.5km to the south.</p> <p>The site is located within agricultural land, which is abundant in the area.</p> <p>The proposal would not have the potential to affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area.</p> <p>While there will be some disturbance of existing grassland on site, there is no evidence on file that the site is of particular ecological value, nor is there evidence that the site is of particular ecological value for any species, and I am satisfied that there will be no significant effects on biodiversity.</p> <p>Replacement of disturbed agricultural land will be provided.</p> <p>The site has not been identified as of particular historic, cultural or archaeological significance and adequate mitigation measures are in place to protect the architectural and archaeological heritage associated with any adjoining structures.</p>
<p>Types and characteristics of potential impacts</p> <p>(Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and</p>	<p>The scale of the proposed development is not significant in the context of existing development in the surrounding area.</p> <p>During the construction phase noise, dust, traffic and vibration emissions are likely. However, any impacts would be local and temporary in nature and the implementation of standard construction practice measures would satisfactorily mitigate potential impacts. Impacts on the surrounding road network at construction stage can be mitigated by</p>

complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	way of adherence to a Construction Management Plan. No significant impacts on the surrounding road network are considered likely at operational stage, with the land being returned to pre-construction conditions
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.

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _____

DP/ADP: _____ **Date:** _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)

Appendix 3: Standard AA Screening Determination

Test for likely significant effects

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	The proposed development is for an underground cable, ring main units and connection to a permitted substation at Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork. I have provided a detailed description of the proposed development elsewhere in my Inspector's Report in relation to this third party appeal.
Brief description of development characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	<p>It is proposed to construct an underground cable to connect two permitted solar farms at the above stated address. A detailed description of the site, surrounding area and proposed development is provided in Sections 1.0 and 2.0 of the Inspector's Report and detailed specifications of the proposal are provided in the AA Screening Report/NIS and other planning documents submitted by the applicant.</p> <p>In summary, the proposed underground cable will connect from Ballynaclashy Solar Farm (permitted, not yet constructed) with Lysaghtstown Solar Farm (existing). The cable will be underground to agricultural land and public roads for a distance of 4.3km and includes all associated works.</p> <p>Potential impacts arise during construction, including noise, traffic and dust. In-stream works proposed to a watercourse that connects to European Sites.</p> <p>The Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC are located approximately 3.5km to the south and are hydrologically connected to the subject site via the Owenacurra River that is likely connected to the Glenamouck Stream, which is crossed during construction works via a dam and flume system, and Leamlara River, which is crossed via horizontal underground drilling, but will have a works area within its corridor.</p>
Screening report	Yes, submitted by the applicant.
Natura Impact Statement	Yes, NIS submitted by the applicant.
Relevant submissions	No relevant submissions in relation to AA matters but some submissions note inappropriate assessment of ecological impacts.

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model

Two European sites were identified as being located within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development as detailed in Table 1 below. I consider that no further range of European Sites is necessary for consideration in relation to this proposed development.

Table 1:

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
Cork Harbour SPA (004030)	<p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1130]</p> <p>Cork Harbour SPA National Parks & Wildlife Service</p>	3.5km south	Yes, proximity and potential surface water runoff to Glenamouck Stream and Leamlara River that is hydrologically connected to the Cork Harbour SPA via the Owenacurra River.	Y
Great Island Channel SAC (001058)	<p>Bird of Special Conservation Interest (SCI):</p> <p>Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004]</p> <p>Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) [A005]</p> <p>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</p> <p>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]</p> <p>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]</p> <p>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</p> <p>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]</p> <p>Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]</p>	3.5km south	Yes, proximity and potential surface water runoff to Glenamouck Stream and Leamlara River that are connected to the Great Island Channel SAC via the Owenacurra River.	Y

	<p>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]</p> <p>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</p> <p>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]</p> <p>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]</p> <p>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]</p> <p>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]</p> <p>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]</p> <p>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</p> <p>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]</p> <p>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]</p> <p>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]</p> <p>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p> <p>Great Island Channel SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service</p>			
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¹ Summary description / **cross reference to NPWS website** is acceptable at this stage in the report

² Based on source-pathway-receptor: Direct/ indirect/ tentative/ none, via surface water/ ground water/ air/ use of habitats by mobile species

³if no connections: N

Given the proposed works within the Glenamouck Stream and the Leamlara River corridor, hydrological connection of Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA to same, potential effects could occur due to impacts on water quality from water contamination during the construction works phase. Impacts from spread of invasive species, Himalayan Balsam is also a potential impact without mitigation.

Significant effects from other pathways have been ruled out i.e., habitat loss, impacts on water quality from surface water during operation, impacts from foul water discharge, impacts from noise and disturbance.

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

The proposed development will not result in any direct effects on either the SPA or SAC as it relates to Cork Harbour or the Great Island Channel. However, due to the size, scale and proximity of the proposed development to Cork Harbour and Great Island Channel, impacts generated by the construction of the Glenamouck Stream and Leamlara River crossing may give rise to impacts without appropriate, specific mitigation.

Sources of impact and likely significant effects are detailed in the table below.

AA Screening matrix

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
<p>Site 1: Great Island Channel SAC (001058) QI list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide ▪ 1330 Atlantic 	<p>Direct: No direct impacts within the SAC.</p> <p>Indirect: Given the proximity and connection of the site to Owenacurra River and the hydrological connection of Great Island Channel SAC to same, potential effects could occur due to impacts on water quality from surface water runoff and silt/sediment filtration during the construction phase.</p> <p>Management of disturbance to invasive species Himalayan Balsam will also be necessary.</p> <p>Significant effects from other pathways have been ruled out i.e., habitat loss, impacts on water quality from surface water during operation, impacts from foul water discharge.</p>	<p>Potential negative indirect effect on habitat quality as a result of impacts on water quality due to the hydrological connection to the SAC.</p> <p>Possibility of significant effects cannot be ruled out without further analysis and assessment.</p>

	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? N/A	
	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
Site 2: Cork Harbour SPA (004030) QI list: Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) [A005] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028] Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054] Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]	As above	Potential negative indirect effect on habitat quality as a result of impacts on water quality due to the hydrological connection to the SPA. Possibility of significant effects cannot be ruled out without further analysis and assessment.

<p>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa 19irsute) [A162] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>		
	<p>Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y</p>	
	<p>If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/A</p>	
<p>Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site</p>		
<p>It is not possible to exclude the possibility that the proposed development alone would not result in significant effects on the Cork Harbour SPA and the Great Island Channel SAC from effects associated with the excavation and storage of soil associated with the proposed project. 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.</p> <p>Proceed to AA.</p>		
<p>Screening Determination</p> <p>Significant effects cannot be excluded</p> <p>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 will give rise to significant effects on the Cork Harbour SPA and the Great Island Channel SAC European Sites in view of the sites conservation objectives.</p>		

It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) [under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000] of the proposed development is required.

Appendix 4: Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment

The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, sections 177V 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 an underground 33kv electric interconnector cable at Ballynaclashy, Ballyrichard Beg, Curragh and Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork in view of the relevant conservation objectives of Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 001058) based on scientific information provided by the applicant.

The information relied upon includes the following:

- Natura Impact Statement prepared by HW Planning Ltd.
- NPWS Website
- Construction Methodology by Suir Engineering

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

No relevant submissions

Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code 004031)

Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage):

- Release of pollutants at construction stage such as sediment, dust, accidental spill of fuels, oils, chemicals effecting water quality and marine natural environment
- Accidental spread of Himalayan Balsam (an invasive species) as a result of the works

See Section 3.1 of NIS

Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes (summary- inserted)	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures (summary) NIS SECTION 4.2 Construction Methodology Section 7.0.
<p>Bird of Special Conservation Interest (SCI):</p> <p>Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004]</p> <p>Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) [A005]</p> <p>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</p> <p>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]</p> <p>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]</p> <p>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</p> <p>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]</p> <p>Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]</p> <p>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]</p> <p>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</p> <p>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]</p> <p>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]</p>	<p>To maintain favourable conservation condition as defined by long term population trend being stable or increasing.</p> <p>No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by the SCI birds other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation.</p> <p>To maintain favourable conservation condition as defined by: No increase in barriers, No significant decline in breeding population, productivity rate, prey biomass Human activities at levels that do not adversely affect the population.</p> <p>To maintain permanent extent of Habitat area.</p>	<p>Section 4.6 of the NIS identifies potential sources of impact including pollution to Cork Harbour SPA from water contamination.</p> <p>The spread of invasive plant species, namely Himalayan Balsam and the potential pathway between the Leamlara River, Owenacurra River and Glounamuck Stream and these two designated Natura 2000 sites, where indirect impacts to water quality cannot be discounted without the implementation of mitigation measures.</p>	<p>As set out in the NIS mitigation measures will be integrated as part of the development of the proposed interconnector route with detailed environmental protection of the two watercourses crossed by the interconnector route: the Leamlara River and Glounamuck Stream. In acknowledgement of the downstream locations of Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA, a precautionary approach is considered appropriate regarding the potential relevance of the mitigation measures to both Natura 2000 sites. Environmental controls will minimise the risk to the Leamlara River during the HDD crossing of the watercourse. Dam and flume construction phase proposals are detailed as part of mitigation measures related to the crossing of the Glounamuck Stream in Section 4.2 of the NIS.</p> <p>Section 7.0 of the Construction Methodology Report sets out best practice construction methods including fencing, silt fencing, location of storage of hydrocarbons etc, spill management and other containment measures.</p>

Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]			
Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]			
Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]			
Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]			
Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]			
Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]			
Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]			
Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]			
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]			
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			

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

(i) Water quality degradation

Indirect habitat loss or deterioration of designated sites within the surrounding area can occur from the effects of run-off or discharge into the aquatic environment through impacts such as increased siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination. This requires connectivity between the site and the designated site in question through watercourses and/or drainage ditches. In this case, the proposed interconnector cables will require a HDD crossings of the Leamlara River just upstream of the confluence with the Owenacurra River and a crossing of Glounamuck Stream via a dam and flume methodology and there are potential hydrological links between the proposed development site and two overlapping designated sites; Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA. An impact-receptor pathway therefore exists between these designated sites and the proposed development sites.

With regard to invasive plant species, it is noted that a number of infestations of Himalayan Balsam were recorded along the road margins of the section of the proposed

interconnector route within the R626 road and in proximity to the Leamlara River HDD crossing.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Proposed mitigation measures include:

- Good practice, standard construction methodologies to reduce surface water run-off during construction
- Appropriate management of chemical storage including spillage procedures, bunded storage areas, security, management of refuelling practices, leakages.
- Management of sediment and silt levels within the site.
- Appropriate foul and surface water management practices.

I am satisfied that the preventative measures which are aimed at interrupting the source-pathway-receptor are targeted at the key threats to protected bird species and by arresting these pathways or reducing possible effects to a non-significant level, adverse effects can be avoided. Mitigation measures can be included by way of condition if appropriate.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects has been assessed adequately in the NIS. The applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that no significant residual effects will remain post the application of mitigation measures and there is therefore no potential for in-combination effects.

The following plans/projects were considered in Section 4.1.1 of the NIS in relation to in-combination effects:

- Solar development applications at Ballyspillane West Solar Farm (Ref. 175498) and Carrigogna Solar Farm (Ref. 187164) as well as the Ballynaclashy and Lysaghtstown Solar Farms associated with the subject proposal in terms of interconnection requirements

Findings and conclusions

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation measures the construction and operation of the proposed development alone, **or in combination with other plans and projects**, will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from aspects of the proposed development can be excluded for the European sites considered in the appropriate Assessment. No direct impacts are predicted. Indirect impacts would be temporary in nature and mitigation measures are described to prevent ingress of silt laden surface water, sedimentation, management of contamination risk and invasive species spread. Monitoring

measures are also proposed to ensure compliance and effective management of measures. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented. In combination effects have also been reasonably assessed and there is no potential for in-combination effects.

Reasonable scientific doubt

I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Site Integrity

The proposed development will not affect the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the Cork Harbour SPA. Adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Great Island SAC (Site Code 001058)

Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage):

- Release of pollutants at construction stage such as sediment, dust, accidental spill of fuels, oils, chemicals effecting water quality and marine natural environment
- Accidental spread of Himlayan Balsam (an invasive species) as a result of the works

See Section 3.1 of NIS

Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes (summary-inserted)	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures (summary)
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, [1140] Atlantic Salt meadows [1330]	Permanent habitat is stable/increasing following Conserve community types in natural condition: mixed sediment to sandy mud with polychaetes and oligochaetes community complex. Intertidal sandy mud community complex; and Intertidal sand community complex.	Section 4.6 of the NIS identifies potential sources of impact including pollution to Great Island Channel SAC from water contamination. The spread of invasive plant species, namely Himalayan Balsam and the potential pathway between the Leamlara River, Owenacurra River and Glounamuck Stream and these two designated	NIS SECTION 4.2 Construction Methodology Section 7.0. As set out in the NIS mitigation measures will be integrated as part of the development of the proposed interconnector route with detailed environmental protection of the two watercourses crossed by the interconnector route: the Leamlara River and Glounamuck Stream. In acknowledgement of the downstream locations of Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA, a precautionary approach is considered appropriate regarding the potential

		<p>Natura 2000 sites, where indirect impacts to water quality cannot be discounted without the implementation of mitigation measures.</p>	<p>relevance of the mitigation measures to both Natura 2000 sites. Environmental controls will minimise the risk to the Leamlara River during the HDD crossing of the watercourse. Dam and flume construction phase proposals are detailed as part of mitigation measures related to the crossing of the Glounamuck Stream in Section 4.2 of the NIS.</p> <p>Section 7.0 of the Construction Methodology Report sets out best practice construction methods including fencing, silt fencing, location of storage of hydrocarbons etc, spill management and other containment measures.</p>
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Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects in view of conservation objectives:

(i) Water quality degradation

Indirect habitat loss or deterioration of designated sites within the surrounding area can occur from the effects of run-off or discharge into the aquatic environment through impacts such as increased siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination. This requires connectivity between the site and the designated site in question through watercourses and/or drainage ditches. In this case, the proposed interconnector cables will require a HDD crossings of the Leamlara River just upstream of the confluence with the Owenacurra River and a crossing of Glounamuck Stream via a dam and flume methodology and there are potential hydrological links between the proposed development site and two overlapping designated sites; Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA. An impact-receptor pathway therefore exists between these designated sites and the proposed development sites.

With regard to invasive plant species, it is noted that a number of infestations of Himalayan Balsam were recorded along the road margins of the section of the proposed interconnector route within the R626 road and in proximity to the Leamlara River HDD crossing.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Proposed mitigation measures include:

- Good practice, standard construction methodologies to reduce surface water run-off during construction
- Appropriate management of chemical storage including spillage procedures, bunded storage areas, security, management of refuelling practices, leakages.
- Management of sediment and silt levels within the site.
- Appropriate foul and surface water management practices.

I am satisfied that the preventative measures which are aimed at interrupting the source-pathway-receptor are targeted at the key threats to protected bird species and by arresting these pathways or reducing possible effects to a non-significant level, adverse effects can be avoided. Mitigation measures can be included by way of condition if appropriate.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects has been assessed adequately in the NIS. The applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that no significant residual effects will remain post the application of mitigation measures and there is therefore no potential for in-combination effects.

The following plans/projects were considered in Section 4.1.1 of the NIS in relation to in-combination effects:

- Solar development applications at Ballyspillane West Solar Farm (Ref. 175498) and Carrigogna Solar Farm (Ref. 187164) as well as the Ballynaclashy and Lysaghtstown Solar Farms associated with the subject proposal in terms of interconnection requirements

Findings and conclusions

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation measures the construction and operation of the proposed development alone, or in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from aspects of the proposed development can be excluded for the European sites considered in the appropriate Assessment. No direct impacts are predicted. Indirect impacts would be temporary in nature and mitigation measures are described to prevent ingress of silt laden surface water, sedimentation, management of contamination risk and invasive species spread. Monitoring measures are also proposed to ensure compliance and effective management of measures. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented. In combination effects have also been reasonably assessed and there is no potential for in-combination effects.

Reasonable scientific doubt

I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Site Integrity

The proposed development will not affect the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the Cork Harbour SPA. Adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

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 Great Island Channel SAC, and Cork Harbour SPA 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 all associated material submitted, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Great Island Channel SAC and the Cork Harbour 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 construction and operational impacts.
- To maintain the special conservation status of existing bird species and extent of habitat.
- the proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the Cork Harbour SPA or Great Island Channel SAC.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed including standard practice construction mitigation measures, dust management and mitigation of siltation/pollution impacts.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA.

Appendix 5: Water Framework Directive Assessment

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	PL-500343-CK-25	Townland, address	BALLYNACLASHY, BALLYRICHARD BEG, CURRAGH and LYSAGHTSTOWN, CO. CORK
Description of project		Proposed underground cable connection between 2no. permitted solar farms and all associated works.	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		Site is located over 4.3km of linear agricultural land and public roads. The site rises from south to north generally and crosses the Glenamouck Stream and the Leamlara River that ultimately drain to Owenacurra River that connects to Cork Harbour and Great Island Channel (3.5km to the south). A water quality monitoring station is located approx. 500m southeast of where the proposed route turns southwest off the R626 and the site is located within the Lee, Cork Harbour and Youghal Bay catchment.	
Proposed surface water details		As existing.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		N/A.	
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues		N/A	

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	Crossed by proposed works at Leamlara River (labelled Owenacurra on EPA Maps)	OWENNACURR A_030 IE_SW_19O030 400	Good	Not at Risk	None	Yes – potential for pollution, siltation and other chemical influence if adequate mitigation not implemented.
Groundwater Waterbody	Underlying site	Ballinhassig East IE_SW_G_004	Good	Not at Risk	Ground	Yes, via groundwater
Transitional Waterbody	3km south	Owenacurra Estuary	Moderate	At risk	None identified	Yes – Glemaouck Stream and Leamlara River ultimately drain to Owenacurra Estuary.

IE_SW_060_040
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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	Waterbody 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.	River	OWENNACU RRA_030 IE_SW_1900 30400	Proposed works in area of river with horizontal drilled crossing	Siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages, environmental pollutants	Standard construction practice Construction Methodology	Yes – proximity of works warrant further assessment.	Screened in
2.	Ground	Ballinhassig East IE_SW_G_00 4	Yes pathway exists via moderate drainage characteristics	Spillages, environmental pollutants	As above	Yes – drainage characteristics warrants further assessment.	Screened in.
3.	Transitional	Owenacurra Estuary IE_SW_060_0400	Yes. Pathway via drainage characteristics.	Spillages, environmental pollutants	As above	No. Adequate separation distances to regulate	Screened out.

						impacts with mitigation.	
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
1.	River	OWENNACU RRA_030 IE_SW_1900 30400	None. Proposed works area reinstated post construction/trenching	None	None	No. Ground reinstated following construction phase and will return to former use.	Screened out
2.	Ground	Ballinhassig East IE_SW_G_00 4	None. Proposed works area reinstated post construction/trenching	None	None	No. Ground reinstated following construction phase and will return to former use.	Screened out
3.	Transitional	Owenacurra Estuary IE_SW_060_ 0400	None. Proposed works area reinstated post construction/trenching	None	None	No. Ground reinstated following construction phase and will return to former use.	Screened out
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
5.	N/A						

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT

Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives

Surface Water

Development/Activity e.g. culvert, bridge, other crossing, diversion, outfall, etc	<u>Objective 1:Surface Water</u> Prevent deterioration of the status of all bodies of surface water	<u>Objective 2:Surface Water</u> Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of surface water with aim of achieving good status	<u>Objective 3:Surface Water</u> Protect and enhance all artificial and heavily modified bodies of water with aim of achieving good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status	<u>Objective 4: Surface Water</u> 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:	
Construction works	Site specific mitigation methods described in the Construction Methodology including: • Management of stream course extraction	Site specific mitigation methods as described.	Site specific mitigation methods as described.	Site specific mitigation methods as described.	YES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of soil • Fuel and chemical handling to include bunding, check for leaks, labelling • Availability of spill kits <p>Site specific construction mitigation methods including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice, standard construction methodologies to reduce surface water run-off during construction • Appropriate management of chemical storage including spillage procedures, banded storage areas, security, management of refuelling practices, leakages. 				
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of sediment and silt levels within the site. 				
Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives					
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)	
Development Activity 1: Development of processing and warehouse facility	Site specific construction mitigation methods including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice, standard construction methodologies to reduce surface water run-off during construction 	Site specific mitigation methods as described.	Site specific mitigation methods as described	Yes	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate management of chemical storage including spillage procedures, bunded storage areas, security, management of refuelling practices, leakages.• Management of sediment and silt levels within the site.			
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