

# **Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)**

## **Volume 2 of 6: EIAR Main Report**

### **(Chapter 1) Introduction**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
AA	Appropriate Assessment
BPS	Booster Pumping Station
BPT	Break Pressure Tank
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
ESBN	Electricity Supply Board Networks
FCV	Flow Control Valve
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
ha	Hectare
HLPS	High Lift Pumping Station
km	Kilometre
kV	Kilovolt
m	Metre
MI	Megalitres
Mld	Megalitres per day
mm	Millimetre
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NSS	New Shannon Source
NTS	Non-Technical Summary (of the EIAR)
NWRP	National Water Resources Plan
RWI&PS	Raw Water Intake and Pumping Station
RWRM	Raw Water Rising Mains
RWRP	Regional Water Resources Plan
SID	Strategic Infrastructure Development
TPR	Termination Point Reservoir
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WRZ	Water Resource Zone
WTP	Water Treatment Plant

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of Report

1. This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) presents an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects and applicable mitigation measures associated with the proposed Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Project'). The Proposed Project requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by An Coimisiún Pleanála, as required by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 (the 'EIA Directive'). The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), transpose the EIA Directive. The EIA Directive requires that the process of EIA be applied to public and private projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment, prior to an application for development consent being determined.

### 1.2 Proposed Project Overview

2. The Proposed Project would comprise an abstraction of raw water from Parteen Basin on the Lower River Shannon and various elements of water supply infrastructure, which collectively would extend from Parteen Basin in County Tipperary, through the Midlands, to Peamount in County Dublin. Six Local Authorities are partly within the Planning Application Boundary: Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council, Tipperary County Council, Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council and South Dublin County Council.
3. The Proposed Project consists of the following main features:
  - Abstraction of raw water from Parteen Basin on the Lower River Shannon downstream of Lough Derg and the towns of Ballina and Killaloe
  - Raw Water Intake and Pumping Station (RWI&PS) on the eastern shore of Parteen Basin, County Tipperary, and pumping from there via twin 1,500 millimetre (mm) diameter Raw Water Rising Mains (RWRM), approximately two kilometre (km) long to a Water Treatment Plant (WTP) near Birdhill, County Tipperary, which would include a High Lift Pumping Station (HLPS)
  - Approximately 170km of 1,600mm diameter single steel pipeline, comprising:
    - Treated Water Pipeline from the WTP to a Break Pressure Tank (BPT) near Cloughjordan, County Tipperary, approximately 37km long
    - Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the Termination Point Reservoir (TPR) at Peamount, County Dublin <sup>1</sup>, approximately 133km in length. The TPR would have a capacity of 75 megalitres (MI)
  - A Booster Pumping Station (BPS) east of Birr, County Offaly, a Flow Control Valve (FCV) near Newtown, County Kildare, valves and other ancillary apparatus along the length of the pipeline
  - Power connections to the infrastructure sites<sup>2</sup> and Line Valves, including uprating of the existing Ardnacrusha – Birdhill 38 kilovolt (kV) overhead line to deliver adequate electrical power to the RWI&PS and WTP and providing a new connection from a sub-station at Birr to the BPS

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<sup>1</sup> A combination of pumping and gravity would be used to transfer water through the pipeline. Water would be pumped from the RWI&PS to the WTP and from the WTP to the BPT which is the high point along the pipeline. From the BPT, the water would usually flow by gravity along the remaining 133km to the TPR. However, at times when the volume of water needed is higher than approximately 165Mld, the water would be pumped through the whole length of the pipeline. The BPS provides the capacity to do this additional pumping when it is required.

<sup>2</sup> 'Infrastructure sites' is the collective term that has been used for the RWI&PS, WTP, BPT, BPS, FCV and TPR.

- Provision of take-off points at strategic locations between the WTP and TPR to facilitate potential future connections to supply communities in the Midlands in the Water Supply Area<sup>3</sup>. The connecting pipelines and associated infrastructure would be delivered through separate projects, yet to be designed, and subject to their own separate consenting processes.
4. A detailed project description is set out in Chapter 4 (Proposed Project Description) of the EIAR, and a detailed description of the construction and commissioning approaches for the Proposed Project is set out in Chapter 5 (Construction & Commissioning).
  5. The aims of the Proposed Project, taking account of the Regional Water Resources Plan (RWRP) Eastern and Midlands (Irish Water 2022) (the 'Eastern and Midlands Plan') (see Section 1.3) are to:
    - Provide a sustainable water supply from a New Shannon Source (NSS)
    - Address critical supply issues in the Greater Dublin Area with provision for future supplies to multiple Water Resource Zones in the Region
    - Increase resilience of supplies and Levels of Service (the reliability of the supply that Uisce Éireann customers can expect to receive)
    - Deliver a flexible, future-proofed solution that is responsive to change.
  6. Once completed, the Proposed Project infrastructure would provide the capacity to meet the needs of 36<sup>4</sup> Water Resource Zones (WRZs) across the Eastern and Midlands Region. This aligns with the Eastern and Midlands Plan. It would do this by securing a new source of drinking water from the River Shannon at Parteen Basin. This would provide the capacity to supply up to 300 megalitres per day (Mld) to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) WRZ and the Proposed Project's wider Water Supply Area. Overall, this volume of water would:
    - Immediately meet the identified need for water within the GDA WRZ to 2050 and beyond
    - Enable the future supply to 17 other WRZs by re-directing supplies within the GDA WRZ and expanding the GDA WRZ by incorporating these WRZs into the GDA Regional WRZ, when future projects are brought forward by Uisce Éireann
    - Enable the future supply to a further 18 WRZs across the Midlands from take-off points along the pipeline and facilitate the consolidation of those WRZs into four new WRZs, when future projects are brought forward by Uisce Éireann
    - Make provision for potential reductions in existing supply volumes due to sustainability requirements anticipated under the new abstraction licensing regime.
  7. A raw water abstraction consent is being sought to cover the operational requirements of providing up to 300Mld of treated water required in 2050 and this is assessed within this EIAR.
  8. A graphical overview of the Proposed Project, including the locations of the water supply infrastructure and routeing of the pipeline, is shown in Image 1.1. More detailed plans of the Proposed Project design are included in Volume 5 (Drawings and Figures) of this EIAR.

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<sup>3</sup> The Water Supply Area is an area defined by the infrastructure and transfer pipeline, where the proximity of treated water supplies from the Proposed Project offers opportunities for potential future consolidation of existing smaller and more vulnerable public water supply schemes, in a resilient, well-supported configuration. Potential future connecting infrastructure would be subject to separate consenting processes.

<sup>4</sup> 37 WRZs were identified in the Regional Water Resources Plan - Eastern and Midlands consisting of the GDA WRZ and 36 other WRZs. Subsequently Bardarrig WRZ and Redcross WRZ have been rationalised and combined and so the total is now 36 WRZ consisting of the GDA WRZ and 35 other WRZs.

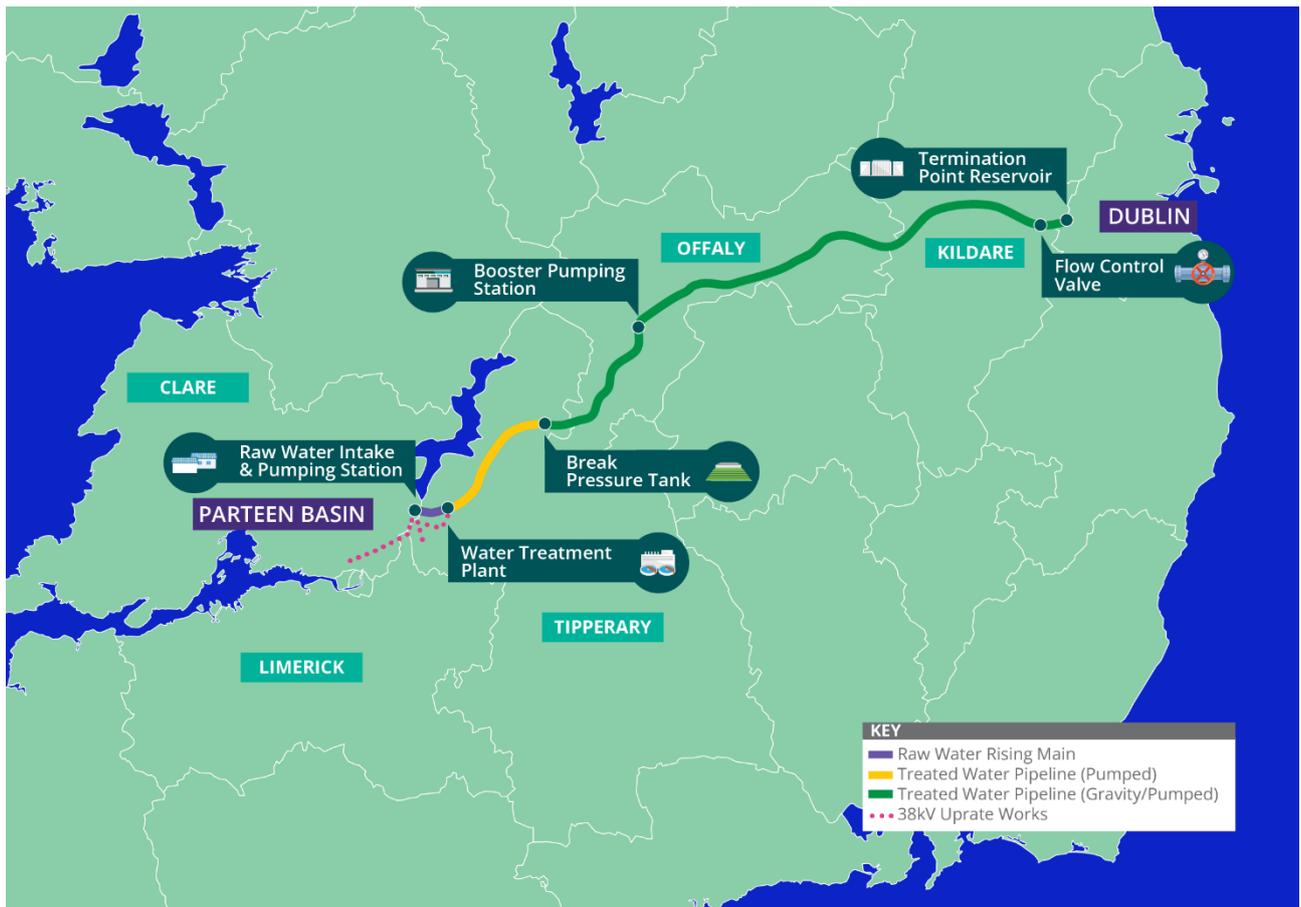


Image 1.1: Graphical Overview of the Proposed Water Supply Infrastructure

9. Table 1.1 outlines a summary of the principal project infrastructure.

Table 1.1: Summary of Principal Project Infrastructure

Proposed Project Infrastructure	Outline Description of Proposed Project Infrastructure*
<b>Permanent Infrastructure</b>	
Raw Water Intake and Pumping Station (RWI&PS) (Infrastructure Site) County Tipperary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RWI&amp;PS would be located on a permanent site of approximately 4ha on the eastern shore of Parteen Basin in the townland of Garrynateel, County Tipperary. In addition, approximately 1ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>The RWI&amp;PS has been designed to abstract enough raw water from the River Shannon at Parteen Basin to provide up to 300Mld of treated water by 2050.</li> <li>The RWI&amp;PS site would include a bankside Inlet Chamber, the Raw Water Pumping Station Building, two Microfiltration Buildings, an Electricity Substation and Power Distribution Building, and Dewatering Settlement Basins. The tallest building on the RWI&amp;PS site would be the Microfiltration Buildings which would be 10.9m above finished ground level. Additionally, there would be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>Power for the RWI&amp;PS would be supplied via an underground connection to the existing Birdhill 38 kV electricity substation.</li> <li>A new permanent access road from the R494 would be constructed to access the proposed RWI&amp;PS site. This access road would be 5m in width and 670m in length.</li> <li>The RWI&amp;PS site boundary would be fenced with a stock proof fence and a 2.4m high paladin security fence 5m inside the boundary. The site would be landscaped in line with the surrounding environment to reduce its visual impact.</li> </ul>

Proposed Project Infrastructure	Outline Description of Proposed Project Infrastructure*
<p>Raw Water Rising Mains (RWRMs) (Pipeline) County Tipperary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RWRMs would consist of two 1,500mm underground pipelines made from steel that would carry the raw water approximately 2km from the RWI&amp;PS to the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) at Incha Beg, County Tipperary. The water would be pumped from the pumping station at the RWI&amp;PS to the WTP.</li> <li>Twin RWRMs have been proposed so that one RWRM can be taken out of service for cleaning and maintenance while still providing an uninterrupted flow of raw water through the other RWRM.</li> <li>The RWRMs would include Line Valves, a Lay-By, Air Valves and Cathodic Protection.</li> <li>A 20m wide Permanent Wayleave would provide Uisce Éireann with operational access to the RWRMs.</li> </ul>
<p>Water Treatment Plant (WTP) (Infrastructure Site) County Tipperary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The WTP would be located on a permanent site of approximately 31ha at Incha Beg, County Tipperary, 2.6km north-east of the village of Birdhill, and 2km east of the proposed RWI&amp;PS. In addition, approximately 2.5ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>The WTP would treat the raw water received from the RWI&amp;PS via the RWRMs. Once treated, the High Lift Pumping Station (HLPS) would deliver the treated water onwards from the WTP to the Break Pressure Tank (BPT) at Knockanacree, County Tipperary, via the Treated Water Pipeline.</li> <li>The WTP would comprise of a series of tanks and buildings including the Raw Water Balancing Tanks, Water Treatment Module Buildings, Sludge Dewatering Buildings, Sludge Storage Buildings, Clear Water Storage Tanks and HLPS, an Electricity Substation and Power Distribution Building, and the Control Building. The tallest building on the WTP site would be the Water Treatment Module Buildings which would be up to 15.6m above finished ground level. Additionally, there would be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>There would also be a potential future water supply connection point at the junction between the permanent access road and the R445.</li> <li>Power for the WTP would be supplied via an underground connection to the existing Birdhill 38 kV electricity substation. Solar panels would be placed on the roofs of the Chemical Dosing Manifold Building, the Water Treatment Module Buildings, Clear Water Storage Tanks and Sludge Storage Buildings, and at a number of locations on the ground to supplement the mains power supply.</li> <li>A new permanent access road from the R445 would be constructed and would be 6m in width and 640m in length.</li> <li>The WTP site boundary would be fenced with a stock proof fence and a 2.4m high palisade security fence 5m inside the boundary. The site would be landscaped in line with the surrounding environment to reduce its visual impact.</li> </ul>
<p>Treated Water Pipeline from the WTP to the BPT (Pipeline) County Tipperary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Treated Water Pipeline from the WTP to the BPT would consist of a single 1,600mm underground steel pipeline which would be approximately 37km long. The water would be pumped through this section of the Treated Water Pipeline by the HLPS.</li> <li>The Treated Water Pipeline would include Line Valves, Washout Valves, Air Valves, Manways, Cathodic Protection and Lay-Bys.</li> <li>A 20m wide Permanent Wayleave would provide Uisce Éireann with operational access to the pipeline (this Wayleave has been extended to approximately 30m at some Line Valves to provide access between the Lay-Bys and Line Valves). There would be an additional 10m wide Permanent Wayleave at certain locations for operational access to smaller pipes connecting Washout Valves with permanent discharge locations.</li> </ul>

Proposed Project Infrastructure	Outline Description of Proposed Project Infrastructure*
<p>Break Pressure Tank (BPT) (Infrastructure Site) County Tipperary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The BPT would be located on a permanent site of approximately 7ha in the townland of Knocknacree, County Tipperary. In addition, approximately 0.8ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>The BPT would be located at the highest point of the pipeline. It marks the end of the Treated Water Pipeline from the WTP to the BPT and the start of the Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the Termination Point Reservoir (TPR) in the townland of Loughtown Upper, at Peamount, County Dublin. It would act as a balancing tank and would be required to manage the water pressures in the entire Treated Water Pipeline during flow changes, particularly during start-up and shut-down.</li> <li>The BPT site would include the BPT and a Control Building. The BPT would be a concrete tank divided into three cells covered with an earth embankment. The BPT tanks would be 5m in height and partially buried below finished ground levels. The Control Building would be 7.5m over finished ground level. Additionally, there would be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>Access to the BPT site would be via a new permanent access road from the L1064 which would be 5m wide and 794m in length.</li> <li>Power for the BPT would be supplied via an underground connection from the existing overhead power line. Solar panels would be placed on the south facing side of the control building roof, on the BPT and at ground level to the south of the site to supplement the mains power supply.</li> <li>The BPT site boundary would be bounded by the existing hedgerow / tree line with a 2.4m high palisade security fence around the permanent infrastructure. The site would be landscaped in line with the surrounding environment to reduce its visual impact.</li> </ul>
<p>Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the TPR (Pipeline) Counties Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare and Dublin (within the administrative area of South Dublin County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the TPR would consist of a single 1,600mm underground steel pipeline, approximately 133km long.</li> <li>The water would normally travel through the Treated Water Pipeline by gravity; however, flows greater than approximately 165Mld would require additional pumping from the Booster Pumping Station (BPS) in the townland of Coagh Upper, County Offaly.</li> <li>The Treated Water Pipeline would include Line Valves, Washout Valves, Air Valves, Manways, Cathodic Protection, Lay-Bys and potential future connection points.</li> <li>A 20m wide Permanent Wayleave would provide Uisce Éireann with operational access to the pipeline (this Wayleave has been extended to approximately 30m at some Line Valves to provide access between the Lay-Bys and Line Valves). There would be an additional 10m wide Permanent Wayleave at certain locations for operational access to smaller pipes connecting Washout Valves with permanent discharge locations.</li> </ul>
<p>Booster Pumping Station (BPS) (Infrastructure Site) County Offaly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The BPS would be located on a permanent site of approximately 2.6ha in the townland of Coagh Upper, County Offaly. It would be located approximately 30km downstream from the BPT. In addition, approximately 3ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>The BPS would be required when the demand for water causes the flow through the pipeline to exceed approximately 165Mld.</li> <li>The BPS site would consist of a single-storey Control Building with a basement below. It would have a finished height of 7.6m above finished ground level. There would also be a separate Electricity Substation and Power Distribution Building. Additionally, there would be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>Power to the BPS would be supplied from an existing 38 kV electricity substation at Birr, through cable ducting laid within the public road network. There would be ground mounted solar panels on the southern side of the BPS site to supplement the mains power supply.</li> <li>The site would be accessed directly from the L3003.</li> <li>The BPS site boundary would be fenced with a stock proof fence and a 2.4m high palisade security fence between 5m -12m inside the boundary. The site itself would be landscaped in line with the surrounding environment to reduce its visual impact.</li> </ul>

Proposed Project Infrastructure	Outline Description of Proposed Project Infrastructure*
<p>Flow Control Valve (FCV) (Infrastructure Site) County Kildare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FCV controls the flows in the Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the TPR. It would be a small permanent site of approximately 0.5ha in the townland of Commons Upper in County Kildare. In addition, approximately 0.6ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>It would consist of three 700mm diameter FCVs and three flow meters installed in parallel with the Line Valve and housed within an underground chamber.</li> <li>Access to the FCV site would be directly off the L1016 Commons Road Upper.</li> <li>Power supply to the FCV site would be provided from the existing low voltage network via a combination of overhead lines and buried cables. There would be ground mounted solar panels on the north-eastern side of the site to supplement the mains power supply.</li> <li>Kiosks at the FCV site would house the Programmable Logic Controller, telemetry and power supply for the Line Valve. There would also be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>The site boundary would be fenced with a stock proof fence and a 2.4m high palisade security fence 5m inside the boundary.</li> </ul>
<p>Termination Point Reservoir (TPR) (Infrastructure Site) County Dublin (within the administrative area of South Dublin County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TPR would be located on a permanent site of approximately 8.3ha adjacent to an existing treated water reservoir in the townland of Loughtown Upper, at Peamount, County Dublin (within the administrative area of South Dublin County Council) and would have capacity for 75ML of treated water supply. In addition, approximately 1.1ha of land would be required on a temporary basis during construction.</li> <li>It would be located at the downstream end of the Treated Water Pipeline from the BPT to the TPR and would be the termination point for the Proposed Project. It would be at this location that the Proposed Project would connect to the existing water supply network of the Greater Dublin Area Water Resource Zone (GDA WRZ).</li> <li>The TPR would consist of an above-ground storage structure, associated underground Scour Water and Overflow Water tanks and a Chlorine Dosing Control Building. The TPR would be a concrete tank divided into three cells and covered with an earth embankment. The top of the TPR would be 11.2m above finished ground level. The Chlorine Dosing Control Building would be 8.4m over finished ground level. Additionally, there would be a telemetry mast, the top of which would be 14m above finished ground level.</li> <li>Power for the TPR would be supplied via an underground connection to the existing electricity substation at Peamount Reservoir. There would be solar panels on top of a portion of the northern cell of the TPR to supplement the mains power supply.</li> <li>A new permanent access road from the R120 would be constructed and would be 5m wide and 342m in length.</li> <li>The TPR site would be bounded by the existing hedgerow to the west and existing fence to the east with a 2.4m high palisade security fence around the permanent infrastructure. The site itself would be landscaped in line with the surrounding environment to reduce its visual impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Proposed 38 kV Uprate Works – Power Supply to RWI&amp;PS and WTP</b>	
<p>Proposed 38 kV Uprate Works Ardnacrusha – Birdhill (Power Supply) Counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed 38 kV Uprate Works would be necessary to deliver adequate electrical power to the RWI&amp;PS and WTP.</li> <li>The proposed works would include the uprating of the existing Ardnacrusha – Birdhill Line and the replacement of polesets/structures with an underground cable along a section of the Ardnacrusha – Birdhill – Nenagh Line.</li> <li>There would also be works at the existing Birdhill 38 kV electricity substation including the provision of a new 38 kV modular Gas Insulated Switchgear Modular Building, new electrical equipment and lighting, together with new fencing and associated works.</li> </ul>
<b>Temporary Infrastructure – Required for Construction Phase Only</b>	
<p>Construction Working Width Counties Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare and Dublin (within the administrative area of South Dublin County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Construction Working Width would be temporarily required for the construction of the RWRMs and the Treated Water Pipeline, and the subsequent reinstatement of the land.</li> <li>The Construction Working Width would generally be 50m in width but would be locally wider near features such as crossings, access and egress points from the public road network, Construction Compounds and Pipe Storage Depots.</li> </ul>

Proposed Project Infrastructure	Outline Description of Proposed Project Infrastructure*
<p>Construction Compounds Counties Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare and Dublin (within the administrative area of South Dublin County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight Construction Compounds would be temporarily required to facilitate the works to construct the Proposed Project. Five Construction Compounds would be located along the route of the Treated Water Pipeline at the following Infrastructure Sites: RWI&amp;PS, WTP, BPT, BPS and TPR, with an additional three Construction Compounds located at Lisgarriff (County Tipperary), Killananny (County Offaly) and Drummond (County Kildare). Construction Compounds would act as a hub for managing the works including plant/material/worker movement, general storage, administration and logistical support.</li> <li>• The Principal Construction Compound at the WTP would require 30ha of land during construction.</li> <li>• The other three Principal Construction Compounds would require land temporarily during construction ranging between approximately 12ha and 16ha.</li> <li>• The four Satellite Construction Compounds at the other permanent Infrastructure Sites (excluding the FCV) would require land during construction ranging between approximately 3ha and 12ha.</li> </ul>
<p>Pipe Storage Depots Counties Tipperary, Offaly and Kildare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nine Pipe Storage Depots would be temporarily required to supplement the Construction Compounds and would serve the installation of pipe between the WTP and the TPR.</li> <li>• Pipe Storage Depots would take direct delivery of the pipe for storage before onward journey to the required location along the Construction Working Width.</li> <li>• The Pipe Storage Depots would vary in size and require land temporarily during construction generally ranging between approximately 2ha and 7ha but with one site being larger at 11ha.</li> </ul>

\* Note all land take numbers in this table are affected by rounding to one decimal place.

### 1.3 National Water Resources Plan

10. In spring 2021, Irish Water (now Uisce Éireann) published the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) Framework Plan (Irish Water 2021). The NWRP sets out how Uisce Éireann will balance the supply and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long term. The 25-year strategy aims to ensure the supply of safe, sustainable, secure and reliable drinking water in Ireland.
11. The NWRP consists of:
  - Phase 1: the NWRP Framework Plan (the 'Framework Plan') which set out the approach to identifying water supply needs and quantifying those needs up to the year 2044 which, following public consultation, was finalised and adopted in spring 2021
  - Phase 2: comprising the development of four RWRPs to identify the optimal technical solutions (the 'Preferred Approaches') required to address the needs outlined in the Framework Plan.
12. The Framework Plan identifies how Uisce Éireann assesses needs across water supplies and the process Uisce Éireann will use to find solutions to address those needs.
13. The Framework Plan identified, at a national level, that a new sustainable source of water is necessary to augment supplies in the Eastern and Midlands Region to address deficits in supply, increase the reliability of the current water supply system, and support future growth now and into the future.
14. The Eastern and Midlands Plan is the RWRP relevant to the Proposed Project (Irish Water 2022). The Eastern and Midlands Plan was adopted by Uisce Éireann in autumn 2022 following public consultation, and applied the methodologies set out in the NWRP Framework Plan to identify the water supply needs of the Eastern and Midlands Region and develop the preferred approaches to resolve them.
15. The Eastern and Midlands Plan identified that a NSS with transfers was the Preferred Approach to address the need of the GDA WRZ. Having identified the NSS as the Preferred Approach to meet the deficit in the GDA WRZ, the Eastern and Midlands Plan identified a Water Supply Area consisting of additional WRZs along the length of the pipeline and also adjacent to the GDA WRZ which had a deficit that could also be met from the NSS.
16. This establishes the need for the Proposed Project as it would deliver a NSS to provide the capacity to meet the deficit in the GDA WRZ and provide take-off points along its length allowing for potential future

connections into 18 other WRZs in the Eastern and Midlands Region (once future projects are brought forward). This would allow those 18 WRZs to be consolidated into four new WRZs. It would also facilitate the potential future supply to 17 other WRZs adjacent to the GDA WRZ through the redistribution of supply within the GDA WRZ and an expansion of the GDA WRZ by incorporating these WRZs into the GDA Regional WRZ (once future projects are brought forward). As a result, the Proposed Project aligns with, and is a significant step towards delivering, the Preferred Approach set out in the Eastern and Midlands Plan for a NSS with transfers (see Chapter 3: Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives, for further information).

## 1.4 Planning Process

### 1.4.1 The Applicant

17. The Water Services Act 2013 transferred responsibility for providing water and wastewater services and infrastructure from the 31 Local Authorities of Ireland to Irish Water (now Uisce Éireann). This transfer of responsibilities also included the transfer of the then water supply project from Dublin City Council to Uisce Éireann in January 2014.
18. Uisce Éireann is the body responsible for making the application for planning permission to An Coimisiún Pleanála and is the applicant for the Proposed Project.
19. Incorporated as a company in July 2013, Uisce Éireann brings the water and wastewater services of the 31 Local Authorities together under one national service provider. Uisce Éireann is responsible for the operation of all public water and wastewater services including:
  - Management of national water and wastewater assets
  - Maintenance of the water and wastewater system
  - Investment and planning
  - Managing capital projects
  - Customer care and billing.
20. Uisce Éireann is also responsible for overseeing decisions regarding capital investment and delivering the capital programme across the country.

### 1.4.2 Strategic Infrastructure Development

21. Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) can generally be described as being of strategic economic or social importance at a national or regional scale, which would contribute significantly to the fulfilment of any of the objectives of the National Planning Framework (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2025)<sup>5</sup> or any regional spatial and economic strategy<sup>6</sup> for an area, or which would have significant effects on the area of more than one planning authority. Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (hereafter ‘the Act’) provides that, in respect of such SID, the application for permission shall be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála (under Section 37E of the Act), rather than to the planning authority in whose area the development would be situated. This consenting route applies in circumstances where the Coimisiún has determined that the Proposed Project is of a class specified in the Seventh Schedule to the Act and that the condition set out in Section 37A(2) of the Act was satisfied.

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<sup>5</sup> The National Planning Framework is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the country for the period to 2040. On 30 April 2025, both Houses of the Oireachtas approved the revised National Planning Framework.

<sup>6</sup> The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy will support the implementation of national government policies such as the National Planning Framework and will also set the framework for local economic development and spatial planning of the local authorities in each region. The Proposed Project falls within the area covered by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (Southern Regional Assembly 2020) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2019).

22. The Proposed Project falls under the Seventh Schedule of the Act, as the development comprises a ‘...*surface water abstraction, where the annual volume of water abstracted or recharged is equivalent to or exceeds 2 million cubic metres*’. The Proposed Project satisfies condition 37A(2) of the Act, in that it:
- Is a development that would be of strategic economic and social importance to the State and the regions in which the development is located, with infrastructure providing the capacity to meet the water demand of the Dublin WRZ to 2050 and beyond, as well as enabling the potential future supply to additional WRZs in the Eastern and Midlands Region
  - Is a development that would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of objectives in the National Planning Framework, specifically in relation to sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure
  - Is a development that would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority, as the development would occur within the areas of six planning authorities (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare, and South Dublin).
23. As per Section 37B(4) of the Act, the Coimisiún has served notice that the Proposed Project satisfies the above conditions set out in Section 37A(2) of the Act, and therefore the planning application for the Proposed Project has been made to the Coimisiún.
24. As per Section 37E(1) of the Act, the planning application made to the Coimisiún is accompanied by this EIAR in respect of the Proposed Project.
25. The Planning and Development Act 2024 repeals and replaces the Act. It will be commenced on a phased basis from 2025. Under the Planning and Development Act 2024, SID comes within the definition of ‘Chapter 4 development’ for which an application for permission is to be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála, subject to any regulations made. To date, the relevant sections of the Planning and Development Act 2024 have not been commenced and no regulations have been issued. As such, the Proposed Project continues to be subject to the Act.

#### **1.4.3 The Licensing Application**

26. In addition to the planning application for the Proposed Project, an application for an abstraction licence for the Proposed Project is required under the Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022. This application will be made to the Environmental Protection Agency as the competent authority for abstraction licensing.
27. This EIAR along with the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and standalone Water Status Impact Assessment Report will inform and support that application as well as the SID planning application.

#### **1.4.4 Transboundary Effects**

28. The potential for the Proposed Project to result in significant environmental effects in another Member State of the European Communities or a state which is a party to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the ‘Espoo Convention’), has been considered in Appendix A1.1 (Transboundary Effects). This has concluded that the Proposed Project is not likely to have significant transboundary environmental effects.

#### **1.4.5 Requirement to Submit an EIAR**

29. In accordance with the requirements of European and national legislation, this EIAR has been prepared to accompany the SID planning application. Further detail on the legislative context and the process are provided in Chapter 2 (The Environmental Impact Assessment Process).

#### 1.4.6 Appropriate Assessment

30. The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)<sup>7</sup> and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)<sup>8</sup> set out various procedures and obligations in relation to nature conservation management, and in particular the conservation of European sites. 'European sites' are defined in Section 177(R) of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as:
- A candidate site of Community importance
  - A site of Community importance
  - A candidate special area of conservation
  - A special area of conservation
  - A candidate special protection area
  - A special protection area.
31. A key protection mechanism is the requirement to consider the possible nature conservation implications of any plan or project on European sites. Appropriate Assessment (AA) comprises an assessment of the implications of a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on the integrity of European sites in view of their conservation objectives.
32. An AA involves the submission of a NIS by the developer to An Coimisiún Pleanála, the publication of the NIS so that the public can offer submissions and observations, and a determination by An Coimisiún Pleanála as to whether or not the Proposed Project would adversely affect the integrity of any European sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the sites. In accordance with these requirements, the Proposed Project has been screened to assess whether it is likely either alone or in combination with other plans or projects to have likely significant effects on European sites.
33. This process has been described in the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region AA Screening Report and NIS, which have been submitted, along with this EIAR, to An Coimisiún Pleanála as part of the SID planning application.

#### 1.4.7 Water Framework Directive

34. Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy is known as the Water Framework Directive<sup>9</sup> (WFD). The WFD requires all water bodies to maintain or achieve high or good chemical status and good ecological status, depending on the current status.
35. To be compliant with the requirements of the WFD, any activity which has the potential to have an impact on WFD water bodies must be assessed to determine whether it could cause deterioration in the ecological status or potential of a water body. It is therefore necessary to consider the possible changes associated with development.
36. A standalone Water Status Impact Assessment Report has been submitted with the SID planning application which documents the findings of the WFD compliance assessment which has been carried out for the Proposed Project.

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<sup>7</sup> Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version).

<sup>8</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

<sup>9</sup> European Union (2000). Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive) [2000].

## **1.5 Structure of this Report**

37. The EIAR is contained in six volumes. The structure of the EIAR is provided in Table 1.2.

38. In addition to the EIAR, the following standalone reports have been submitted:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
- Natura Impact Statement
- Water Status Impact Assessment Report.

39. A Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted with the EIAR (see Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment Process, for further information). This is included in Appendix A5.1 of the EIAR.

**Table 1.2: Structure of this EIAR**

Chapter	Description
<b>Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary (NTS)</b>	
NTS	Summary of the EIAR in non-technical language.
<b>Volume 2: EIAR Main Report</b>	
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	The Environmental Impact Assessment Process
Chapter 3	Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives
Chapter 4	Proposed Project Description
Chapter 5	Construction & Commissioning
<b>Volume 3: Environmental Assessment</b>	
Chapter 6	Noise & Vibration
Chapter 7	Traffic & Transport
Chapter 8	Biodiversity
Chapter 9	Water
Chapter 10	Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology
Chapter 11	Agriculture
Chapter 12	Air Quality
Chapter 13	Climate
Chapter 14	Population
Chapter 15	Human Health
Chapter 16	Landscape & Visual
Chapter 17	Cultural Heritage
Chapter 18	Material Assets
Chapter 19	Resource & Waste Management
Chapter 20	Risk of Major Accidents and/or Disasters
<b>Volume 4: Summary</b>	
Chapter 21	Cumulative Effects & Interactions
Chapter 22	Summary of Significant Residual Effects
<b>Volume 5: Drawings and Figures</b>	
Figures	Graphics and plans supporting the EIAR chapters, illustrating the Proposed Project and environmental information. Figure reference numbers correspond to the relevant EIAR chapter (e.g. Figure 8.1 relates to Chapter 8).
<b>Volume 6: Appendices</b>	
Appendices	Technical reference information supporting the EIAR chapters, such as calculations and detailed background data. Appendix numbers correspond to the relevant EIAR chapter (e.g. Appendix A8.1 relates to Chapter 8).

## **1.6       References**

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2025). National Planning Framework - First Revision April 2025.

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (2019). Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region.

Irish Water (2021). National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) Framework Plan.

Irish Water (2022). Regional Water Resources Plan (RWRP) Eastern and Midlands.

Southern Regional Assembly (2020). Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.