

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

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

### **(Chapter 2) The Environmental Assessment Process**

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### Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
IEMA	Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
POAR	Preliminary Options Appraisal Report
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
S.I.	Statutory Instrument
SID	Strategic Infrastructure Development

## 2. The Environmental Impact Assessment Process

### 2.1 Introduction

1. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process for evaluating the likely significant effects on the environment<sup>1</sup> caused by a proposed development or project. Where a development could result in likely significant effects, design or other mitigation measures are proposed to avoid these effects altogether or reduce them to acceptable levels.
2. This chapter outlines the legislation and guidance which governs EIA and describes the EIA process and how this has been applied to the Proposed Project.
3. The Proposed Project is subject to EIA by An Coimisiún Pleanála, as required by the EIA Directive. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the associated Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) give effect to the EIA Directive in respect of development of the form of the Proposed Project. The Planning and Development Act 2024 and any associated regulations (not published to date) will similarly give effect to the EIA Directive when the relevant sections are commenced and associated regulations are put in place.

### 2.2 EIA Legislation

4. The requirements of the EIA Directive were transposed into Irish planning law with the enactment of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 296 of 2018), with effect from 1 September 2018.
5. Article 5(1) of the EIA Directive states the information provided by a developer must include at least the elements outlined in Table 2.1. This table also includes a guide to where the relevant information required by the EIA Directive can be found within this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

**Table 2.1: Information Required under Directive 2014/52/EU Article 5(1)**

Article 5(1) Information Requirement	Where this Information can be Found in this EIAR
(a) A description of the project comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project	<b>Volume 2: EIAR Main Report</b> Chapter 4 (Proposed Project Description) Chapter 5 (Construction & Commissioning)
(b) A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment	<b>Volume 3: Environmental Assessment</b> Chapter 6 to Chapter 20: These chapters include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline environment</li> <li>• Appraisal method for the assessment of effects</li> <li>• Assessment of effects</li> <li>• Mitigation and monitoring measures</li> <li>• Residual effects</li> </ul> Chapter 21 (Cumulative Effects & Interactions)
(c) A description of the features of the project and/or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment	<b>Volume 3: Environmental Assessment</b> Chapter 6 to Chapter 20 <b>Volume 4: Summary</b> Chapter 22 (Summary of Significant Residual Effects) <b>Volume 6: Appendices</b> Appendix A5.1 (Construction Environmental Management Plan)

<sup>1</sup> In the context of the EIA Directive, the term environmental effects has a broad definition and includes many aspects of the natural environment as well as the human environment.

Article 5(1) Information Requirement	Where this Information can be Found in this EIAR
(d) A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the project on the environment	<b>Volume 2: EIAR Main Report</b> Chapter 3 (Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives)
(e) A non-technical summary of the information referred to in points (a) to (d)	<b>Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary</b> Non-Technical Summary
(f) Any additional information specified in Annex IV relevant to the specific characteristics of a particular project or type of project and to the environmental features likely to be affected, including a reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the report	<b>Volume 3: Environmental Assessment</b> Chapter 6 to Chapter 20 (reference section at the end of each chapter)

## 2.3 EIA Legislation and Guidance

6. The assessment of likely significant environmental effects has been completed in accordance with, but not limited to, the following legislation, and any amendments thereto, and with regard to the following guidance:

- The EIA Directive (as amended)
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)
- Planning and Development Act 2024
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2022)
- Guidelines for the Assessment of Indirect and Cumulative Impacts as well as Impact Interactions (European Commission (EC) 1999)
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on Scoping (EC 2017a)
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EC 2017b)
- Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Environmental Impact Assessment (EC 2013)
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2018)
- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment (English Planning Inspectorate 2024)
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to Shaping Quality Development (IEMA 2015).

7. In addition to the applicable EIA legislation and guidance, the EIAR process has been conducted in accordance with all EU Directives and national legislation relating to the environmental topics considered within this EIAR, which are addressed and listed in the relevant assessment chapters.

## 2.4 EIA Process

8. The EIAR is the document produced to report on the environmental assessment process. It provides a description of the baseline environment, identification of the likely significant effects as a result of the Proposed Project, and a description of any mitigation or monitoring measures required to avoid or reduce such effects. The EIAR reports not only the likely significant adverse effects on the environment, but also positive effects such as community benefits.

9. The EIA Directive has defined EIA as a process consisting of:
- The preparation of an EIAR by the developer
  - Undertaking consultations with the public, prescribed bodies and any other EU member states where transboundary effects have the potential to occur
  - An examination by the competent authority of the information presented in the EIAR, any supplementary information provided by the developer and any relevant information received through consultations
  - The reasoned conclusions by the competent authority on the likely significant effects of the project on the environment, taking into account the examination referred to above and, where appropriate, a supplementary examination
  - The integration of the competent authority's reasoned conclusion on the significance of the effects, into its decision to grant consent, refuse consent or grant consent with conditions.
10. The EIAR must identify, describe and assess, in an appropriate manner, the direct and indirect effects of a proposed development on the following, in line with Article 3 of the EIA Directive:
- Population and human health
  - Biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive)
  - Land, soil, water, air and climate
  - Material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape
  - Interactions between the factors referred to above.
11. This EIAR has been conducted in accordance with best practice and takes into account information compiled through a desk-based assessment, field surveys and modelling, and consultation with the relevant statutory bodies and the general public. The specific best practice and guidance used for each environmental topic is detailed in the relevant assessment chapter of this EIAR.

## **2.5 EIA Screening**

12. As discussed in Chapter 1 (Introduction), the Proposed Project comprises Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) under Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). A notice was served by An Coimisiún Pleanála to Úisce Éireann pursuant to Section 37B(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 which confirmed that the project comprises SID. Section 37E of the 2000 Act mandates that applications in respect of which such a notice has been served shall be accompanied by an EIAR in respect of the proposed development. An EIAR of the Proposed Project and all its proposed elements has been carried out.

## **2.6 EIA Scoping**

13. Scoping is the process of determining the content and extent of matters that should be covered in the environmental information submitted to the competent authority. Scoping requires the consideration of the nature and likely scale of the environmental effects that could arise from a proposed development or project and what methods should be used to collect and assess that information.
14. Although scoping commences early in the assessment process and informs the content, methods and level of detail to be provided within the EIAR, it should be noted that this was a dynamic and iterative process and was an ongoing phase throughout the development of the EIAR. Due to the scale of the project, Uisce Éireann (then known as Irish Water) chose to consult on the project and initiate the scoping process early in its development. This early consultation aimed to deliver a robust and comprehensive

approach to assessment. Scoping has been undertaken for previous iterations of the project<sup>2</sup>, as described in Section 2.6.1 and Section 2.6.2, and for the Proposed Project for which the SID planning application is being made (Section 2.6.3).

15. The scope of each individual topic area contained within this EIAR is defined in the methodology section of each topic chapter (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment).

### **2.6.1 2016 Scoping Letter and Draft EIS Scoping Report**

16. A Scoping Letter was issued to statutory and non-statutory bodies in February 2016. The letter requested feedback on the environmental aspects of the proposed water abstraction from Parteen Basin, County Tipperary, and the construction of a pipeline and associated infrastructure from there to a Termination Point Reservoir near Peamount, County Dublin, as set out in the Preliminary Options Appraisal Report (POAR) (Irish Water 2015c). This informal consultation invited early engagement with stakeholders to seek information relevant to a previous iteration of the project and/or highlight any issues applicable to both the Construction and Operational Phases that should be addressed in the EIS (now EIAR) and/or Natura Impact Statement (NIS).
17. A Draft EIS Scoping Report (Irish Water 2016a) was issued to key stakeholders (both statutory and non-statutory organisations) between March and July 2016. The Draft EIS Scoping Report set out the proposed scope of work and methods to be applied in the development of the EIAR and the proposed structure and contents of the EIAR. The Draft EIS Scoping Report sought informal feedback on a 200m wide Preferred Pipeline Corridor within the Least Constrained Pipeline Corridor as set out in the POAR.
18. The objective of the Draft EIS Scoping Report was to:
  - Identify positive and adverse environmental effects which may arise during construction and operation of the then previous iteration of the project and which should therefore be addressed in more detail as part of the EIAR (i.e. scoped into the environmental assessment)
  - Examine whether any environmental effects may be partially or wholly omitted from the EIAR (scoped out)
  - Outline proposed assessment methodologies for completing the EIAR
  - Outline the likely contents of the EIAR
  - Form a basis of common reference for consultation on the scope and methodology for the EIAR.
19. This step within the scoping exercise was based on a previous iteration of the project, however, feedback received from stakeholders informed future scoping and design development and has been considered in this EIAR where relevant to the Proposed Project.

### **2.6.2 EIS Scoping Report 2016**

20. In November 2016, Uisce Éireann published the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region EIS Scoping Report (Irish Water 2016b) which set out the proposed scope of work and methodologies to be applied in the development of the EIAR and outlined the proposed structure of the EIAR document.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Previous iterations of the project' refer to the In-flight Water Supply Project developed prior to the adoption of the National Water Resources Plan and Eastern and Midlands Plan. The 'Proposed Project' refers to the project that planning permission is being sought for as described in Chapter 4 (Proposed Project Description) in this EIAR and that has taken account of the conclusions of the National Water Resources Plan and Eastern and Midlands Plan. The Proposed Project aligns with the Preferred Approach for the Eastern and Midlands Region, a New Shannon Source with transfers as set out in the Eastern and Midlands Plan. See Chapter 3 (Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives) for further information.

21. The main objective of the EIS Scoping Report was to:

- Provide a description of the project (previous iteration of the project at the time the report was produced)
- Identify likely significant effects which may arise during the construction and operation of the project
- Outline proposed assessment methodologies for completing the EIAR
- Outline the likely content of the EIAR
- Form a basis of common reference for consultation about the scope and methodology for the EIAR.

22. This step within the scoping exercise was based on a previous iteration of the project, however, feedback received from stakeholders informed future scoping and design development and has been considered in this EIAR where relevant to the Proposed Project.

### **2.6.3 EIAR Scoping Methodology Report 2023**

23. An EIAR Scoping Methodology Report was issued to statutory and non-statutory stakeholders in November 2023 (Uisce Éireann 2023). This set out the proposed scope and methodology for each topic in the EIAR, based on the Proposed Project, taking into consideration the various changes in legislation, guidance and best practice that occurred since the EIS Scoping Report was published in 2016, progression of the EIA process to date, and ongoing technical consultations. The objectives of the report were to consult and seek feedback from the competent authorities on the proposed scope and methodology for the assessment, prior to submission of the EIAR with the SID planning application to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

24. The EIAR Scoping Methodology Report set out the following for each environmental topic in the EIAR:

- The study area to be used for the assessment
- The scope of the assessment (i.e. matters scoped in and out of the assessment)
- The methodologies and guidance to be applied to the assessment, including information on surveys and modelling techniques
- The assessment criteria to be applied to determine the significance of environmental effects.

25. Consultation feedback on the EIAR Scoping Methodology Report has been considered in the preparation of this EIAR, as detailed in each topic chapter (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment).

## **2.7 Environmental Impact Assessment Report**

### **2.7.1 General Assessment Approach**

26. The assessment of likely significant environmental effects has been conducted with regard to the guidance set out in Section 2.3, including the EPA (2022) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (hereafter referred to as the 'EPA Guidelines (2022)') and other topic-specific guidance where relevant. The EIAR has also been completed with regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EC 2017b).

27. In addition to the applicable EIA legislation and guidance, relevant EU Directives and national legislation relating to the specialist areas have been considered as part of the assessment process.

28. The overall assessment approach has included the following steps:

- Inclusion of design measures to 'avoid' likely significant effects within the Proposed Project (i.e. embedded mitigation)
- Desktop data gathering and field survey to establish baseline conditions
- Assigning the receptor sensitivity or importance
- Assessing and characterising the magnitude of impacts and significance of effects (refer to Section 2.7.3 below for an explanation of the terms 'impacts' and 'effects')
- Incorporating mitigation measures to avoid and/or reduce likely significant effects
- Reporting the residual significant effects after mitigation.

### **2.7.2 Data Collection**

29. The environmental baseline of the Proposed Project and its surroundings has been established for each environmental topic in the EIAR. Data have been collected through consultations with relevant authorities, statutory and non-statutory bodies and stakeholders, desktop reviews of available data, literature reviews, and detailed interpretation of specialist surveys and modelling. Further information on the specific data collection undertaken for each topic is included in the respective chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment).

### **2.7.3 Identifying Likely Significant Effects**

30. For each environmental topic chapter, an impact assessment section identifies, describes and assesses the likely significant effects which may arise either directly or indirectly from the Proposed Project. 'Impacts' are defined as the changes resulting from an action required for the Proposed Project and 'effects' are defined as the consequences of impacts. In EIA, effects are assessed in terms of their significance to give decision makers a measure of the importance, or gravity, of the environmental effect.
31. Impacts can affect the environment in a variety of ways, resulting in effects that can be adverse or beneficial, direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative, temporary or permanent, short, medium or long term. For an effect to occur, there needs to be an impact source, pathway and receptor.<sup>3</sup>
32. The topic chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment) clearly set out the criteria and standards of significance, sensitivity, and magnitude used to identify the likely significant effects. Any assumptions and/or limitations in reaching assessment conclusions are recorded. An explanation is provided for each environmental topic on the criteria that have been applied, including reference to the appropriate published guidance.
33. The EIAR evaluates the Construction Phase and Operational Phase (as well as the Testing and Commissioning Stage) of the Proposed Project and the likelihood, extent, magnitude, duration and significance of effects have been described. The potential for cumulative effects and interactions to arise has also been considered.
34. For all environmental topics, the residual significant effects, i.e. those effects predicted once mitigation and monitoring measures are taken into consideration, have been identified.

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<sup>3</sup> In EIA the term 'receptor' refers to a feature, asset or resource, either in the natural or human environment, where an effect may occur.

### 2.7.4 General Assessment Criteria

35. The EPA Guidelines (2022) provide a description of general criteria for assessing and defining the environmental effects of a project. These are set out in Table 2.2. The topic chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment) set out how these criteria have been applied at a topic level in the EIAR, in addition to any other topic-specific guidance and assessment criteria that have been applied. Certain topics do not use the EPA approach, because they use calculations and empirical thresholds rather than qualitative criteria. These topics include noise and vibration, traffic and transport, air quality and climate. In all cases, professional judgement has been applied to the assessment to underpin the outcomes. Where professional judgement is used, this has been accompanied by text to explain the reasons and justification.

**Table 2.2: Description of Effects – Reproduced from the EPA Guidelines (2022)**

Description of Effects	
<p><b>Quality of Effects</b></p> <p>It is important to inform the non-specialist reader whether an effect is positive, negative or neutral.</p>	<p><b>Positive Effects</b></p> <p>A change which improves the quality of the environment (for example, by increasing species diversity, or improving the reproductive capacity of an ecosystem, or by removing nuisances or improving amenities).</p>
	<p><b>Neutral Effects</b></p> <p>No effects, or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.</p>
	<p><b>Negative/Adverse Effects</b></p> <p>A change which reduces the quality of the environment (for example, lessening species diversity or diminishing the reproductive capacity of an ecosystem, or damaging health or property or by causing nuisance).</p>
<p><b>Describing the Significance of Effects</b></p> <p>'Significance' is a concept that can have different meanings for different topics – in the absence of specific definitions for different topics the following definitions may be useful.</p>	<p><b>Imperceptible</b></p> <p>An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.</p>
	<p><b>Not Significant</b></p> <p>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.</p>
	<p><b>Slight Effects</b></p> <p>An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.</p>
	<p><b>Moderate Effects</b></p> <p>An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.</p>
	<p><b>Significant Effects</b></p> <p>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.</p>
	<p><b>Very Significant</b></p> <p>An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.</p>
	<p><b>Profound Effects</b></p> <p>An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.</p>
<p><b>Describing the Extent and Context of Effects</b></p> <p>Context can affect the perception of significance. It is important to establish if the effect is unique or, perhaps, commonly or increasingly experienced.</p>	<p><b>Extent</b></p> <p>Describe the size of the area, the number of sites and the proportion of a population affected by an effect.</p>
	<p><b>Context</b></p> <p>Describe whether the extent, duration or frequency will conform or contrast with established (baseline) conditions (is it the biggest, longest effect ever?).</p>

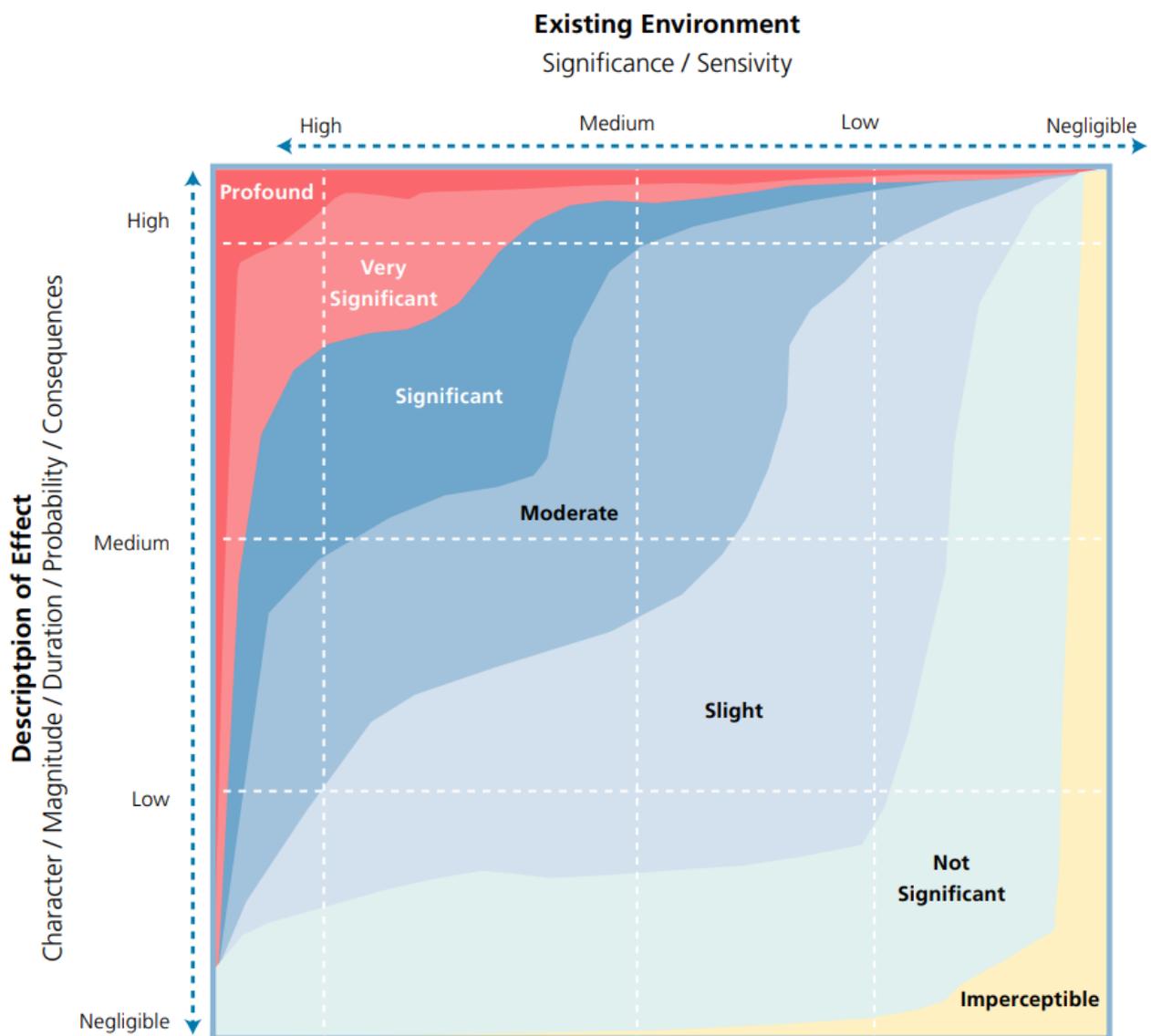
Description of Effects	
<p><b>Describing the Probability of Effects</b></p> <p>Descriptions of effects should establish how likely it is that the predicted effects will occur so that the competent authority can take a view of the balance of risk over advantage when making a decision.</p>	<p><b>Likely Effects</b></p> <p>The effects that can reasonably be expected to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.</p>
	<p><b>Unlikely Effects</b></p> <p>The effects that can reasonably be expected not to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.</p>
<p><b>Describing the Duration and Frequency of Effects</b></p> <p>'Duration' is a concept that can have different meanings for different topics – in the absence of specific definitions for different topics the following definitions may be useful.</p>	<p><b>Momentary Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting from seconds to minutes.</p>
	<p><b>Brief Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting less than a day.</p>
	<p><b>Temporary Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting less than a year.</p>
	<p><b>Short-term Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting one to seven years.</p>
	<p><b>Medium-term Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.</p>
	<p><b>Long-term Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.</p>
	<p><b>Permanent Effects</b></p> <p>Effects lasting over sixty years.</p>
	<p><b>Reversible Effects</b></p> <p>Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration.</p>
<p><b>Describing the Types of Effects</b></p>	<p><b>Frequency of Effects</b></p> <p>Describe how often the effect will occur (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually).</p>
	<p><b>Indirect Effects (Secondary or Off-site Effects)</b></p> <p>Effects on the environment, which are not a direct result of the project, often produced away from the project site or because of a complex pathway.</p>
	<p><b>Cumulative Effects</b></p> <p>The addition of many minor or insignificant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects.</p>
	<p><b>'Do-Nothing Effects'</b></p> <p>The environment as it would be in the future should the subject project not be carried out.</p>
	<p><b>'Worst-Case' Effects</b></p> <p>The effects arising from a project in the case where mitigation measures substantially fail.</p>
	<p><b>Indeterminable Effects</b></p> <p>When the full consequences of a change in the environment cannot be described.</p>
	<p><b>Irreversible Effects</b></p> <p>When the character, distinctiveness, diversity or reproductive capacity of an environment is permanently lost.</p>
	<p><b>Residual Effects</b></p> <p>The degree of environmental change that would occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect.</p>
<p><b>Synergistic Effects</b></p> <p>Where the resultant effect is of greater significance than the sum of its constituents.</p>	

36. In addition to the use of these criteria, the most common method employed to determine significance of effects is to compare the magnitude of the predicted impact with the sensitivity of the receiving environment. 'Magnitude' includes the amount of change brought on by an impact, the time period over

which the effect would occur, and whether the effect is permanent or reversible. ‘Sensitivity’ describes the value or importance placed upon a receptor. A typical matrix is shown in Table 2.3, and visually in Image 2.1, which are based on the EPA Guidelines (2022) and provide a method of combining magnitude of impact and sensitivity of a receptor to achieve a decision on the significance of effect. The use of this approach enhances the transparency and robustness of the professional judgement employed.

**Table 2.3: Significance of Environmental Effect (Adapted from EPA Guidelines (2022))**

Magnitude of Impact	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Negligible	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Negligible	Imperceptible	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Low	Not Significant	Slight	Slight	Moderate	Significant
Medium	Not Significant	Slight	Moderate/Significant	Significant	Very Significant
High	Not Significant	Moderate	Significant	Very Significant	Profound



**Image 2.1: Matrix for the Assessment of Significant Effects with Professional Judgement (EPA 2022)**

37. Significant, Very Significant and Profound effects, as defined in Table 2.2, are considered 'significant' for the purpose of defining significance thresholds in the EIAR. These are effects that could be determined to be either highly beneficial or unacceptable in environmental and social contexts and which are important to the decision-making process. Some topics may use topic-specific guidance that deviates from the EPA criteria defined in Table 2.2, and therefore the level of effect considered 'significant' may differ (e.g. a moderate effect could be considered 'significant' for some topics). In all cases, each topic chapter clearly states the methodology and assessment criteria applied and the reasons for the conclusions reached on the significance of effects.

#### **2.7.5 Mitigation Measures**

38. Mitigation measures aim to avoid, reduce and, where feasible, remedy significant adverse environmental effects. The purpose of any mitigation measure is to eliminate the effect or, if that is not feasible, to reduce its significance.
39. Mitigation measures are also proposed for 'not significant' effects where such measures are routinely applied (for example in the management of construction-related impacts).
40. For the purposes of the environmental assessment, three types of mitigation are described in the EIAR, along with offsetting. These are adapted from the IEMA (2015) guidance on environmental assessment, and align with the mitigation hierarchy which seeks to avoid, prevent, reduce, and offset environmental effects (in that order of priority):
- Embedded mitigation: Intrinsic part of design, usually applied to strategic issues such as the selection of the location or route for the infrastructure or through the choice of the technology process. These factors are considered at the earliest stage of design development to avoid significant adverse effects. Where these design measures or decisions have been adopted into the Proposed Project they are considered to be embedded within the design and are included within the project description and associated design plans. For the Proposed Project, consideration has been given, for example, to the locations of the infrastructure sites through a site selection assessment and in the alignment of the pipeline to avoid properties and environmentally sensitive features.
  - Standard and good practice mitigation: Measures required regardless of the EIA process because they are generally imposed through legislative requirements or standard sector practices (e.g. implementing considerate contractor practices to reduce nuisance from site work). These generic measures are captured in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) contained in Appendix A5.1.
  - Specific mitigation: Specific measures required to prevent or reduce significant adverse effects. In cases where effects cannot be avoided it may still be possible to prevent or reduce the effects, whether through limiting the source of effects (e.g. through setting limits on emissions), reducing the concentration of emissions and effects, or through seeking to limit the exposure of the receptor. Reducing the effect seeks to monitor and control emissions so that acceptable standards/limits are not exceeded. Examples include the use of noise barriers or landscape planting installed between the receptor(s) and the source of the effects. Specific mitigation measures are described in the topic chapters of the EIAR and are included in the CEMP (Appendix A5.1), including the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (Annex G of Appendix A5.1).
  - Offsetting: Offsetting is the last resort and only implemented where significant adverse effects cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced. Where significant adverse effects cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced then measures to compensate for the adverse effect can be implemented. This could include, for example, planting of new vegetation/habitat elsewhere to replace the unavoidable loss of similar vegetation.

41. Mitigation of environmental effects is an iterative process. At all stages in the design process for the Proposed Project, and through optioneering on previous iterations of the project, assessments have been carried out to understand the likely significant effects and to embed mitigation measures into the design to avoid or reduce adverse effects.
42. The topic chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment) set out the measures that have been incorporated into the Proposed Project in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy and that have been considered when determining the residual effects.
43. A CEMP has been prepared to support this EIAR (Appendix A5.1). The CEMP provides the environmental management framework to be adhered to during the Pre-Commencement, Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Project. It incorporates the mitigating principles that govern how works will be undertaken to avoid, prevent or reduce environmental effects. The CEMP sets out the standard, good practice measures that will be implemented during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Project and includes a Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (Annex G of Appendix A5.1) which captures all of the topic-specific mitigation measures proposed in this EIAR (and other documents, where relevant).
44. The CEMP includes the following topic-specific management plans (Annex A to F of Appendix A5.1):
  - Surface Water Management Plan – Annex A
  - Soils Management Plan – Annex B
  - Waste and By-Product Management Plan – Annex C
  - Noise and Vibration Management Plan – Annex D
  - Dust Management Plan – Annex E
  - Traffic Management Plan – Appendix A7.2 of the Traffic & Transport chapter
  - Invasive Species Management Plan – Annex F.
45. The CEMP will be a 'live' document, subject to further minor amendment to take into account the requirements of conditions attached to statutory consents, or ground or weather conditions. This may include the revision and addition of content throughout the pre-commencement phase, and into the enabling works, Construction Phase and final commissioning of the Proposed Project. It will be expanded and updated prior to the commencement of any construction activities on site, including incorporating the requirements of conditions attached to statutory consents. Any future updates to the CEMP will be drafted in accordance with the mitigation measures specified in this EIAR and the CEMP in Appendix A5.1, as well as the NIS and Water Status Impact Assessment Report. Any updates or changes will not be permitted to reduce the level of environmental protection or mitigation as set out in Appendix A5.1 and therefore, cannot result in a change in the predicted likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project.

### **2.7.6 Cumulative Effects and Interactions**

46. Annex IV(5)(e) of the EIA Directive requires consideration of the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development resulting from, among other things, *'the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources'*.
47. Cumulative effects can occur when a combination of different effects from a proposed project (e.g. air quality, noise and traffic) are predicted to affect a common baseline resource or receptor (known as intra-project effects) or when an environmental resource or receptor is affected by more than one proposed development, development plan, or land allocation (known as inter-project effects).

48. Chapter 21 (Cumulative Effects & Interactions) sets out the approach to the cumulative effects assessment. The assessment of intra-project effects is described in the respective environmental topic chapters (Chapters 6 to 20) and the identified interactions are summarised in Chapter 21. Examples of intra-project effects assessments within the topic chapters include the following:
- Chapter 8 (Biodiversity) includes the assessment of effects in relation to water, air quality and noise on ecology receptors
  - Chapter 14 (Population) considers the impacts on community amenity due to combined effects from changes in traffic, air quality, noise and visual amenity
  - Chapter 15 (Human Health) considers the impacts on human health due to combined effects from changes in traffic, air quality, noise, water quality and contaminated land.
49. The assessment of inter-project effects is primarily described in Chapter 21. However, certain aspects of the inter-project assessment are addressed within topic chapters, for example where future committed developments are included within the traffic modelling and the outputs from that modelling are used to inform the assessments of air quality and noise effects, or where existing development under construction forms part of the future baseline.
50. The inter-project cumulative effects assessment considers the following:
- Projects under construction (unless construction is due to finish before construction of the Proposed Project begins, in which case these other developments form part of the future baseline and are assessed in the topic chapter as such)
  - Projects with permitted application(s) but not yet implemented
  - Projects with submitted application(s) but not yet determined
  - Projects identified in the relevant County Development Plans and Strategies
  - Projects identified in other plans and programmes (as appropriate) which set the framework for future development consents/approvals, where such development is reasonably likely to come forward.

### **2.7.7 Construction Phase**

51. The scope of the environmental assessments include all activities associated with the construction of the Proposed Project, as described in Chapter 5 (Construction & Commissioning). This includes effects arising from site clearance, temporary working methods and site re-establishment. Part of the Construction Phase is a distinct set of activities required to put the Proposed Project into operation. These are referred to as the Testing and Commissioning Phase.

### **2.7.8 Testing and Commissioning Phase**

52. The scope of the environmental assessments include the Testing and Commissioning Phase which would take place at the end of construction and involves checking that the pipe is clean and secure and would operate as planned. For a number of environmental topics there would be no potential effects arising from these activities, but for some topics such as water, there would be specific likely effects that could arise during testing and commissioning.

### **2.7.9 Operational Phase**

53. The operation of the Proposed Project is part of the scope of the environmental assessments. This considers the permanent effects that would arise from the Proposed Project infrastructure including specifically the infrastructure sites, the pipeline itself and the ongoing activities they support. This includes routine maintenance and inspection of the infrastructure and the replacement of assets during the lifespan of the Proposed Project.

### **2.7.10 Decommissioning Phase**

54. The Proposed Project would deliver nationally important strategic infrastructure with individual elements designed with a lifespan of 80 to 100 years. The strategic importance of the Proposed Project for water supply in the Eastern and Midlands Region is such that there is no plan to decommission these structures and Uisce Éireann is committed to maintaining and repairing them into the future. On this basis it is not likely that the structures would be decommissioned and therefore, decommissioning of the Proposed Project has not been considered further in the EIAR.

## **2.8 Scrutiny and Consent**

55. This stage of the EIA process includes statutory consultation. Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Section 235 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 require pre-application consultation with An Coimisiún Pleanála.
56. Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that, when submitting a SID planning application, the applicant must also submit it to various prescribed bodies (as defined under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2024). It also involves publication of the EIAR for the purpose of obtaining submissions and observations from interested members of the public.
57. The Water Supply Project: Eastern and Midlands Region – Consultation Report, which forms part of the SID planning application, describes the public consultation and communications undertaken by Uisce Éireann prior to lodgement of the application.
58. Scrutiny includes the examination by the competent authority of the information presented in the EIAR, any supplementary information provided by the developer and any information received through consultations, including consultations with the public.
59. Article 8a of the EIA Directive specifies the information which must be included in the competent authority's decision. This must include the reasoned conclusions on the significant effects of the Proposed Project on the environment and take into account the outcomes of the examination and, where appropriate, a supplementary examination.

## **2.9 Enforcement and Monitoring**

60. The EIA Directive requires that the features of the Proposed Project and/or measures envisaged to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if feasible, offset significant adverse effects on the environment are implemented by the developer. The developer should also monitor predicted significant adverse effects on the environment and the efficacy of mitigation measures. The type of parameters to be monitored and the duration of the monitoring shall be proportionate to the nature, location and size of the project and the significance of its effects on the environment. It is anticipated that the obligations would be discharged by the inclusion of appropriate conditions in any grant of planning permission and the scrutinising and enforcement of compliance by Uisce Éireann.

## **2.10 Preparation of EIAR**

### **2.10.1 EIAR Format**

61. This EIAR has been prepared with regard to advice on the presentation of information in an EIAR as set out in the EPA Guidelines (2022) and in the Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EC 2017b). The EIAR examines each environmental topic as a separate chapter referring to the existing environment, the impacts on that

baseline and the likely significant environmental effects that may arise as a result, and the proposed mitigation measures that are being put forward to avoid or reduce these effects.

### **2.10.2 EIAR Structure**

62. The structure of the EIAR is set out in Chapter 1 (Introduction).
63. As far as is practicable, the chapters are written in a non-technical style to make it accessible to a wider, non-specialist audience. Where technical terminology is used, an explanation is provided in the text, and/or in the list of abbreviations which is provided at the beginning of each chapter in Volume 3 of the EIAR. A Non-Technical Summary is provided in Volume 1 of the EIAR.
64. Generally, Volume 3 (Environmental Assessment) topic chapters are presented with the same structure which includes the following headings:
- Introduction – Provides an overview of the aims and objectives of the chapter in assessing the Proposed Project
  - Methodology – Outlines the scope and study area of the assessment and describes the forecasting methods and evidence used to identify and assess the significant effects of the Proposed Project on the environment. Any limitations and assumptions relevant to the assessment are also stated in this section
  - Baseline environment – The baseline refers to the presence and status of current environmental features and resources. Baseline definition involves the collection and analysis of information on the condition, sensitivity and importance of relevant environmental features which are likely to be affected by the Proposed Project
  - Assessment of effects – Provides a description of the likely significant effects on the environment resulting from the construction and operation of the Proposed Project. The assessment in this section is in the absence of mitigation measures, with the exception of design measures that have been embedded into the design to avoid significant adverse effects (i.e. embedded mitigation)
  - Mitigation and monitoring measures – Sets out measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if feasible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, identify any proposed monitoring arrangements. The section also states how mitigation measures are secured in the SID planning application
  - Residual effects – Explains the extent to which significant adverse effects on the environment would be avoided, prevented, or reduced. Effects that remain after mitigation are referred to as 'residual effects'. These are the remaining environmental effects of the Proposed Project that could not be reasonably avoided, prevented, or reduced.

### **2.10.3 EIAR Competent Expertise**

65. The EIA Directive requires that the EIAR be prepared by 'competent experts'. The EIAR has been prepared by Jacobs Tobin on behalf of Uisce Éireann, with support from specialist sub-consultants, including:
- Corporate Health Ireland (health)
  - Philip Farrelly & Company Limited (agronomy)
  - AWN Consulting Limited (air quality, climate, noise and vibration)
  - Macro Works Limited (landscape and visual)
  - Irish Archaeological Consultancy Limited (cultural heritage).

66. Jacobs holds the EIA Quality Mark from IEMA<sup>4</sup>, demonstrating competency in the preparation of EIARs.
67. The EIAR was undertaken, managed and compiled by experienced and competent environmental professionals with the appropriate experience and qualifications for their respective topics. The overall EIA lead and competent expert responsible for the EIAR is:
- A senior associate director and Chartered Environmentalist with 17 years' experience in EIA and environmental consulting, holding degrees in Environmental Management and Law
  - A member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
  - Experienced in the environmental assessment of major infrastructure projects across Ireland and the United Kingdom.
68. Appendix A2.1 sets out the qualifications and experience of the individual contributors to the EIAR.

## 2.11 Consultation

69. Consultation forms an essential part in the development of any infrastructure project. Uisce Éireann has, wherever feasible, undertaken an accessible, meaningful, accountable, transparent and proportionate consultation and engagement process with individual members of the public, communities, landowners, businesses, elected representatives and other stakeholder groups and organisations, throughout the project development. This process is summarised in the Project Consultation Roadmap shown in Image 2.2.
70. The Project Consultation Roadmap sets out key phases of consultation that were undertaken in the development of the Proposed Project.
71. As shown in Image 2.2, Uisce Éireann has consulted upon and adopted its National Water Resources Plan, comprising a Framework Plan (Phase 1) and four Regional Water Resources Plans (Phase 2) (including the Eastern and Midlands Plan). Following this, Uisce Éireann held a non-statutory consultation for the Proposed Project to provide an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to provide feedback on the Proposed Project, following the adoption of the Framework Plan and the Eastern and Midlands Plan. Section 2.11.2 describes the non-statutory consultation that has been undertaken for the Proposed Project.
72. The public and stakeholders were consulted on previous iterations and the project so that the views of these stakeholders could be considered and, where feasible and relevant, fed into the design development of the Proposed Project. This consultation is shown in the 'Consultation on Previous Iterations of the Project' box in Image 2.2 and summarised in Table 2.4. Feedback received as part of the public consultation stages on previous iterations of the project (shown in Table 2.4), in combination with on-the-ground technical and environmental investigations, has formed a key part of the development of the Proposed Project.

**Table 2.4: Summary of Consultation on Previous Iterations of the Project**

Subject	Consultation Terms of Reference	Stakeholder Engagement
Project Need Report (Irish Water 2015a) including Project Consultation Roadmap March 2015 to May 2015 (8 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has Uisce Éireann considered all issues related to project need? Have all factors been considered?</li> <li>• Would you like to be kept informed of project updates and if so, would you be happy to be added to our database and to receive regular project updates?</li> <li>• The Roadmap we propose to follow in bringing forward a solution to meet the need is presented as part of this consultation.</li> </ul>	16 stakeholder meetings 1 Oireachtas open day 27 written submissions

<sup>4</sup> Since July 2025, IEMA has officially rebranded as the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals.

Subject	Consultation Terms of Reference	Stakeholder Engagement
Options Working Paper (Irish Water 2015b) June 2015 to September 2015 (8 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other national, regional or locally important constraints should Uisce Éireann take into account when locating the infrastructure associated with each water supply option?</li> <li>• Have you any comments on the proposed constraints and the approach to their use?</li> <li>• Are there any assessment criteria other than those proposed which should be used in the next phase of options appraisal?</li> <li>• How would you like to be communicated with, as the project progresses?</li> </ul>	12 stakeholder meetings 1 Oireachtas open day 46 written submissions
POAR (Irish Water 2015c) November 2015 to February 2016 (10 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has Uisce Éireann taken all relevant factors into account in reaching the findings outlined in the POAR?</li> <li>• How would you like Uisce Éireann to communicate with you on future developments in this project?</li> </ul>	46 stakeholder meetings 1 Oireachtas open day 4 public open days 42 written submissions
Final Options Appraisal Report (Irish Water 2016c) and EIS Scoping Report (Irish Water 2016b) November 2016 to February 2017 (14 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any additional information that should be considered in the development of the Preferred Scheme?</li> <li>• Are there any additional environmental issues or alternative methodologies that should be taken into consideration in preparing the EIS?</li> <li>• How would you like Uisce Éireann to communicate with you as the project progresses towards planning approval?</li> </ul>	50 stakeholder meetings 2 Oireachtas open days 8 public open days 6 landowner evenings 409 written submissions

73. The key consultation objectives were:

- To provide opportunities for the public and stakeholders to review and provide comments and feedback on the project development and to participate in the decision-making process
- To establish a sufficiently robust environmental baseline
- To identify specific concerns and issues relating to the project, to inform the design and assessment where relevant
- To comply with Uisce Éireann's governing legislation and regulations. Uisce Éireann is governed by over 15 key regulations. These govern and guide the communications and consultation requirements of Uisce Éireann strategies, plans and projects. These include, but are not limited to:
  - The Aarhus Convention<sup>5</sup>
  - Water Services Act 2013
  - Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Planning and Development Act 2024
  - Freedom of Information Act 2014
  - European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 (as amended)
  - EU General Data Protection Regulation (2016)
  - Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015
  - European Communities Directive (2001/42/EC)
  - Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)
  - The EIA Directive
  - Irish Water Customer Handbook (Commission for Energy Regulation 2020).

74. An Coimisiún Pleanála will carry out a statutory consultation upon receipt of the SID planning application, as required by planning and development legislation.

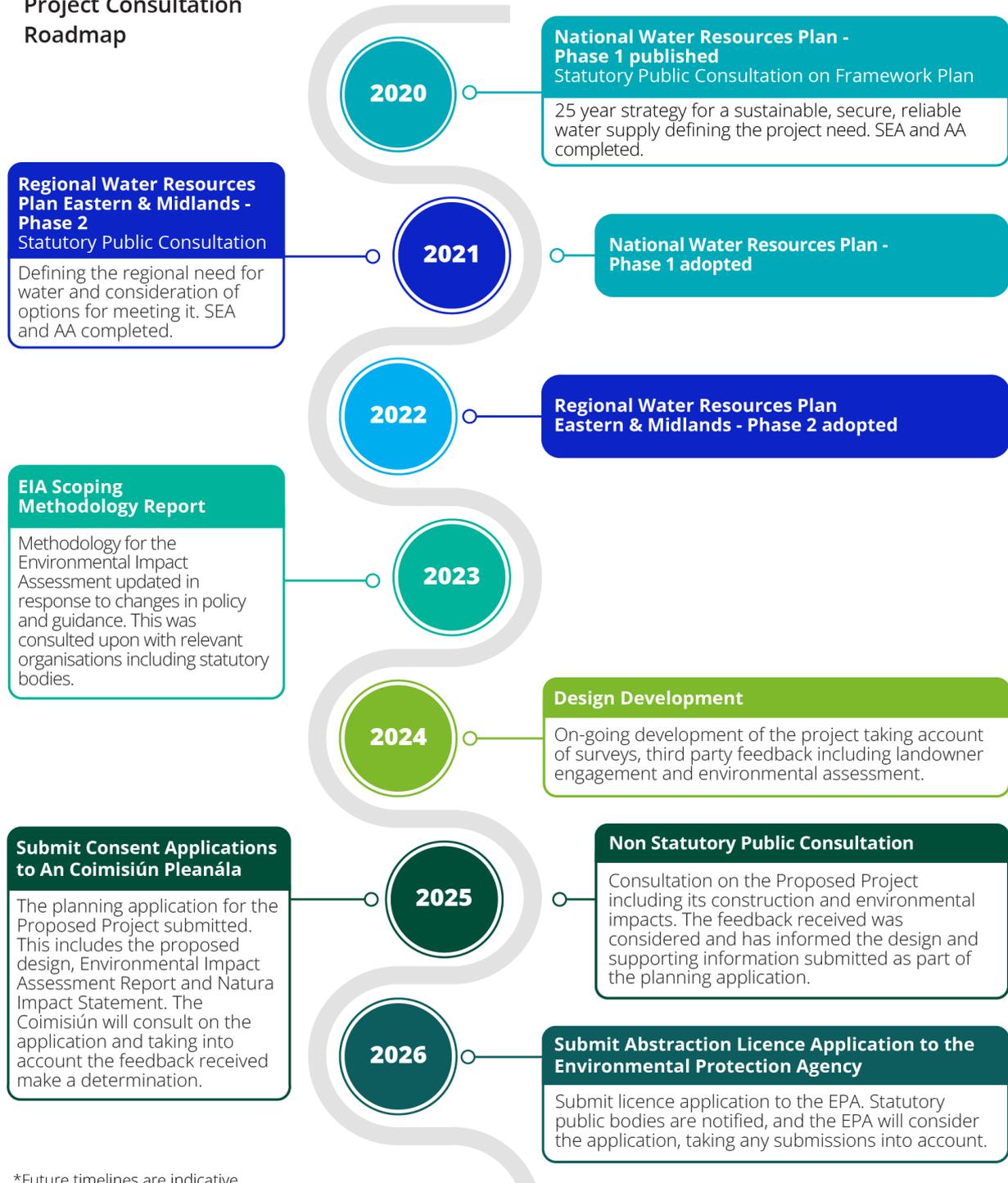
<sup>5</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

## Water Supply Project Eastern & Midlands Region

### Consultation on previous iterations of the project

- The Project Need Report consultation March 2015
- The Options Working Paper consultation June 2015
- The Preliminary Options Appraisal Report consultation November 2015
- The Final Options Appraisal Report and the EIS Scoping Report consultation November 2016

### Project Consultation Roadmap



\*Future timelines are indicative

**Image 2.2: Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region Project Roadmap**

### 2.11.1 Pre-Application Consultation with An Coimisiún Pleanála

75. The planning application for the Proposed Project is being made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála. Pre-application consultations have been undertaken with An Coimisiún Pleanála, and the key issues highlighted at these meetings are outlined in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: Key Issues Raised During Pre-Application Meetings with An Coimisiún Pleanála**

Consultation Meeting Date	Key Topics
November 2024	<p>Uisce Éireann presented the Proposed Project to An Coimisiún Pleanála. This was the first engagement with An Coimisiún Pleanála following the adoption of the National Water Resources Plan and the Regional Water Resource Plan – Eastern and Midlands Region (in May 2021 and Autumn 2022 respectively). A range of topics were covered, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project need</li> <li>• Alignment with the National Water Resources Plan and the Regional Water Resource Plan – Eastern and Midlands Region</li> <li>• Overview of the proposed works</li> <li>• Construction overview</li> <li>• Wayleaves and acquisition</li> <li>• Architecture and landscape</li> <li>• Sustainability strategy and objectives</li> <li>• Policy updates</li> <li>• Abstraction</li> <li>• Consultation.</li> </ul>
February 2025	<p>The pre-application meeting covered the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of the non-statutory consultation</li> <li>• Design and construction, including commissioning strategy and working in peat methods</li> <li>• Environmental surveys</li> <li>• Transboundary effects</li> <li>• Wayleaves and acquisition</li> <li>• Community gain fund.</li> </ul>
April 2025	<p>The pre-application meeting covered the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abstraction modelling</li> <li>• Wayleaves and acquisition</li> <li>• Lodgement strategy.</li> </ul>
May 2025	<p>The pre-application meeting covered the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental design and sustainability strategy</li> <li>• Update on the EIAR, including EIA process, scoping, screening, legislation, structure of the EIAR, and topic updates on methodology, surveys, likely significant effects and mitigation</li> <li>• Update on the NIS</li> <li>• Update on the Water Framework Directive assessment</li> <li>• Abstraction legislation and interaction with the EPA.</li> </ul>
June 2025	<p>Two workshops were held in June where the project team briefed An Coimisiún Pleanála on each design element across the whole length of the Proposed Project. For each design element, information was provided on the design (for example, permanent land take, operational processes, buildings); construction (for example temporary land take, construction sequence, key construction activities); environmental issues (for example, likely effects, mitigation, sustainable design, and stakeholder issues); and any key issues raised at the non-statutory consultation.</p>
July 2025	<p>A summary session was held to review the matters raised in the two workshops in June.</p>

76. In addition, nine pre-application consultation meetings were held with An Coimisiún Pleanála between 2014 and 2021. These meetings related to previous iterations of the project.

### 2.11.2 Non-Statutory Public Consultation

77. Uisce Éireann undertook an eight week non-statutory consultation for the Proposed Project between January and March 2025 in order to inform the SID planning application for the Proposed Project.
78. Non-statutory consultation is carried out by the applicant of a project, in this instance Uisce Éireann. This is distinct from statutory consultation which is carried out by a statutory authority such as An Coimisiún Pleanála or consultation which is a legislative requirement.
79. While consultation is a legal requirement, legislation does not strictly define the manner or extent of consultation. Uisce Éireann used its knowledge and experience of consultation and stakeholder engagement from other large infrastructure projects to define its approach on the Proposed Project. This involved defining the level of non-statutory consultation to be carried out.
80. The overarching objective of the public consultation and engagement process is to provide members of the public, communities, businesses, landowners and interested stakeholders and organisations with information and to allow them to contribute to the design and inform the EIA process. All communications and engagement were designed to be accessible, meaningful and accountable, thereby allowing the process to be transparent and proportionate.
81. Different communication channels were used throughout the consultation process to enable easy access to information and to provide an opportunity for members of the public to give feedback on the Proposed Project. These information channels included, but were not limited to, a project website, project email address, postal address and phonenumber, publication of reports and other materials, public open days and stakeholder briefings. The project information channels for the non-statutory consultation went live in January 2025. A full suite of project information materials was developed to generate awareness of the Proposed Project and to facilitate public participation. These materials included but were not limited to:
  - Project Summary Report (Uisce Éireann 2024)
  - Supporting figures, including overview component maps and landscape plans
  - Artistic visualisations for the RWI&PS, WTP, BPT, BPS and TPR
  - A series of factsheets summarising the pipeline, infrastructure sites and ancillary pipeline features such as valves.
82. Uisce Éireann and their appointed consultants were available throughout the non-statutory consultation to provide information, updates and answer queries. Consultation is a two-way exchange of information. The non-statutory consultation provided an opportunity to disseminate information on the Proposed Project and also for Uisce Éireann to receive valuable inputs from consultees.
83. As part of the non-statutory consultation, Uisce Éireann carried out a number of public information days. These were held locally to the Proposed Project study area in Nenagh, Killaloe, Tullamore, Birr, Maynooth, and Johnstown.
84. A total of 121 submissions were received during the non-statutory consultation. This included responses from individuals, sports clubs, landowners, business organisations, elected representatives, government agencies and departments, environmental groups, private and state-owned companies, councils, community groups and non-government organisations. All submissions received by Uisce Éireann were logged, acknowledged and given full consideration.
85. The Water Supply Project: Eastern and Midlands Region – Consultation Report, which forms part of the SID planning application for the Proposed Project, details the public consultation process undertaken for the Proposed Project and how public participation and landowner engagement has informed the development of the Proposed Project.

86. The response to feedback is outlined to demonstrate how public and stakeholder feedback was reviewed, considered, and informed the decisions made on the Proposed Project. In this way, public feedback received as part of the consultation, in combination with on-the-ground stakeholder meetings, technical and environmental investigations, formed a key part in the development of the Proposed Project.
87. A summary of the subject matter relevant to the environmental assessment raised during the non-statutory consultation periods is outlined in Table 2.6.

**Table 2.6: Topics Raised During Non-Statutory Consultation Relevant to the Environmental Assessment**

Summary of Topics Raised During Non-Statutory Consultation		
Need for the project	Construction noise and dust	Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Alternatives	Impact on agronomy and livestock	Water quality and pollution
Climate resilience	Construction traffic management	Water Framework Directive assessment
Water demand	Sludge waste and disposal	Impact on aquatic and terrestrial ecology
Water conservation	Watercourse crossings – impacts and mitigation	Impact on peat and peatland restoration
Fish protection and fish stock	Reinstatement of land post-construction	Spread of invasive and non-native species
Alignment of the pipeline	Water levels in Parteen Basin and Lough Derg	Climate change and carbon emissions
Energy consumption/power requirements	Volume of water in the Lower River Shannon and compensation flow	Landscape and visual impacts, including lighting
Integrity of Fort Henry Embankment	Structure and content of the EIAR	Impact on tourism and amenities
WTP discharge to the Kilmastulla River	Impact of drought on proposed abstraction	Impact on cultural heritage and archaeology
Construction disruption and management	Abstraction modelling	Operational noise from the infrastructure sites

### 2.11.3 Consultation on the EIA Process

88. In addition to the non-statutory public consultation on the Proposed Project outlined in Section 2.11.2, Uisce Éireann undertook consultation on the EIA process. Stakeholders were informed of the consultation through the project communication channels and were invited to make submissions on the issues and methodologies to be considered in the EIA process. Consultative meetings were offered as required.
89. The Scoping Methodology Report was issued to stakeholders in November 2023 in order to consult and seek feedback from them on the proposed scope and methodology of the environmental assessment in advance of the EIAR being produced. Table 2.7 summarises the consultation responses received.

**Table 2.7: Summary of Responses to the Scoping Methodology Report**

Consultee	Feedback / Comment on the Scoping Methodology Report	Uisce Éireann Response
Clare County Council	Clare County Council requested a meeting with Uisce Éireann to enable an understanding of the main implications of the Proposed Project for County Clare and the main environmental considerations.	Uisce Éireann has held a meeting with Clare County Council on the Proposed Project and the EIAR.
Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	The Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine advised that the Proposed Project does not fall under the remit of the EIA Regulations as they relate to the Department. The Department noted reference to hedgerows and drainage features on agricultural land and made reference to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations.	Noted. This does not affect the proposed EIAR methodology.
Irish Aviation Authority	No comments on the EIAR Scoping Methodology Report as the Proposed Project would not interact with aviation interests.	Noted. No proposed amendments to the EIAR methodology.

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(Chapter 2) The Environmental Impact Assessment Process

Consultee	Feedback / Comment on the Scoping Methodology Report	Uisce Éireann Response
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	Transport Infrastructure Ireland requested a meeting with Uisce Éireann to examine locations and areas within which the Proposed Project may interact with the national road network.	Uisce Éireann held a meeting with Transport Infrastructure Ireland on the Proposed Project.
Commission for the Regulation of Utilities	The Commission for the Regulation of Utilities requested a briefing on four aspects of the EIAR: Water Environment, Climate, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology, and Population. There were no comments on the Scoping Methodology Report.	Uisce Éireann held a meeting with the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities to discuss the aspects raised.
Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage	The Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage provided a response which covered the EIAR topic areas of cultural heritage, biodiversity and cumulative effects. In relation to cultural heritage, it requested field surveys to complement desk-based activities and confirmed the need for a well-defined and well-characterised baseline. The Department comments on biodiversity were primarily related to the European-designated Lower River Shannon SAC and the potential environmental effects of the proposed abstraction regime upon the hydrological and water quality status of the SAC upstream and downstream of Parteen Basin. The response raised five biodiversity and water resource questions to be considered in the EIAR and also noted that the status of European protected species should be addressed. The potential implications of any cumulative and in-combination effects were also noted.	Comments raised by the Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage have been considered in the EIAR. Uisce Éireann has met the National Monuments Service of the Department to discuss the comments made concerning pre-application surveys. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has also been consulted.
National Transport Authority	The National Transport Authority had no substantive issues to raise but did request that the definitions/areas to be considered under the material assets chapter should be expanded to include all transport infrastructure including roads, public transport and active travel infrastructure.	Chapter 18 (Material Assets) includes the impact on rail and road infrastructure. Public transport is included in Chapter 7 (Traffic & Transport). Active travel is assessed in Chapter 14 (Population) with respect to access and severance, and Chapter 7 in terms of amenity.
Fáilte Ireland	Fáilte Ireland noted that from a tourism perspective, population (including tourism), landscape and visual, and cultural heritage considerations are of the most relevance and importance. The proposed inclusion of tourism considerations within the Population chapter of the EIAR was welcomed. Fáilte Ireland provided background data indicating the importance of tourism to the Irish economy and also directed Uisce Éireann to EIAR Guidelines for the consideration of tourism and tourism-related projects.	The EIAR has considered tourism within Chapter 14 (Population). The guidance proposed by Fáilte Ireland has been considered.
National Environmental Health Service	<p>The National Environmental Health Service commented on a range of topics, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public agencies and the public should be involved in the consultation. A report should be submitted on the consultation process and how outcomes were considered in the EIAR</li> <li>Need for clear links between the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the National Water Resource Plan and the Proposed Project</li> <li>There are clear established health protection standards and evaluation criteria for all emissions into the environment and these should be used</li> <li>Specific consideration should be given to any restriction or change of access to any healthcare facilities during the construction phase</li> <li>There are opportunities to enhance access to green space and development of recreational and community facilities. Consideration should be given to impacts on informal recreational areas impacted by the development (e.g. woodland areas)</li> <li>When assessing community severance and construction impacts (including dust), any likely effect on food premises should be assessed</li> <li>The National Environmental Health Service has considered the proposed noise assessment methodology and is satisfied that it will assess the likely significant effects of noise</li> <li>If averaging dust deposition standards are used to evaluate the significance of dust, then a maximum daily limit should be included.</li> </ul> <p>The impact on public transport should be assessed during the construction phase, particularly the access to community facilities and healthcare premises and services.</p>	<p>Uisce Éireann has undertaken a non-statutory consultation as well as engagement with statutory and non-statutory bodies, and a Consultation Report has been submitted with the SID application.</p> <p>Comments raised by the National Environmental Health Service have been considered in the EIAR (see topic chapters in Volume 3 of the EIAR for responses to each comment).</p>

Consultee	Feedback / Comment on the Scoping Methodology Report	Uisce Éireann Response
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Inland Fisheries Ireland noted its statutory responsibilities for inland fisheries in Ireland and made reference to the need for the Proposed Project to avoid adverse impacts on surface and groundwater resources. It was recommended that a Construction Surface Water Management Plan is developed and submitted as part of the Strategic Infrastructure Development Application. They requested that method statements to enable implementation of the Construction Surface Water Management Plan should be developed in consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland. They also referenced guidance documents which should be referred to in production of the EIAR and noted seasonal constraints that may arise in relation to in-channel construction activities.	A CEMP and Surface Water Management Plan have been produced which include details of the methods for surface water management (Appendix A5.1). The guidance documents recommended by Inland Fisheries Ireland have been considered as part of the EIAR, along with consideration of seasonal constraints in relation to construction activities.

90. Direct engagement was also conducted by individual environmental specialists within organisations such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, EPA and relevant county councils. Feedback from this engagement has been considered in the development of the relevant environmental assessment chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment).

#### 2.11.4 Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties

91. The requirement for statutory consultation is set out in Section 37E(3)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which requires that a SID planning application must be submitted to various prescribed bodies. Consultation with prescribed bodies is also enabled in Section 116(4)(b)(iv) of the Planning and Development Act 2024. Uisce Éireann engaged with the identified potential prescribed bodies as per the Act and also other interested parties early in the project development process.

92. Consultation has been undertaken with the prescribed bodies and interested parties listed in Table 2.8.

**Table 2.8: Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties**

Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties	
<b>Prescribed Bodies</b>	
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	National Transport Authority
Department of Transport	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	An Chomhairle Ealaíon/Arts Council
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	An Taisce
Department of Rural and Community Development	Fáilte Ireland
Department for Environment Climate and Communications	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Commission for Regulation of Utilities
Clare County Council	Iarnród Éireann
Kildare County Council	Commission for Railway Regulation
Limerick City and County Council	The Heritage Council
Tipperary County Council	Health Service Executive
Offaly County Council	Health and Safety Authority
South Dublin County Council	Irish Aviation Authority
Waterways Ireland	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
Córas Iompair Éireann	Southern Regional Assembly
EPA	EirGrid
Electricity Supply Board	Office of Public Works

<b>Prescribed Bodies and Interested Parties</b>	
<b>Interested Parties</b>	
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Laois County Council
Department of Social Protection	Bord na Móna
Dublin City Council	Fingal County Council
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	-

93. Feedback from consultation with the prescribed bodies and interested parties has been considered in the preparation of the EIAR and incorporated into final design proposals, where practicable. This is summarised in the Water Supply Project: Eastern and Midlands Region – Consultation Report that has been submitted as part of the SID planning application.

### **2.11.5 Landowners**

94. A key element of the consultation process for the Proposed Project is landowner engagement (including land tenant or occupier where appropriate). Uisce Éireann established a Landowner Liaison Officer team which has provided a dedicated point of contact for affected landowners.

95. Issues raised by landowners have included, for example, reinstatement and the construction process, mitigation and compensation, and re-route requests. Where requests have been received from affected landowners to have the pipeline route amended, the request has been facilitated where it was technically feasible, had no significant adverse environmental effects, and was acceptable to any other impacted landowners.

96. Landowner engagement is an ongoing process which has provided landowners with a dedicated point of contact. It has allowed landowners to address any individual issues of concern related to the Proposed Project. The Landowner Liaison Officers continued to liaise with all landowners during the planning phase and will continue to work with landowners through the Construction Phase.

## **2.12 Difficulties Encountered During the Preparation of the EIAR**

97. The EIA Directive requires that difficulties encountered during the preparation of the EIAR, such as technical deficiencies and lack of information or knowledge, should be described. The main difficulties encountered for each environmental topic are detailed in the methodology sections of the individual chapters (Volume 3: Environmental Assessment). This includes information on any data gaps for establishing baseline conditions, and limitations associated with surveys, modelling, and assessment techniques.

## 2.13 References

Commission for Energy Regulation (2020). Irish Water Customer Handbook.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2018). Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

Environmental Protection Agency (2022). Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in an Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.

European Commission (1999). Guidelines for the Assessment of Indirect and Cumulative Impacts as well as Impact Interactions.

European Commission (2013). Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Environmental Impact Assessment.

European Commission (2017a). Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on Scoping.

European Commission (2017b). Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2015). IEMA Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to Shaping Quality Development.

Irish Water (2015a). Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region, Project Need Report.

Irish Water (2015b). Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region, Options Working Paper.

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Irish Water (2016a). Draft Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Report.

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Irish Water (2016c). Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region, Final Options Appraisal Report.

Planning Inspectorate (2024). Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-on-cumulative-effects-assessment>. Accessed October 2024.

Uisce Éireann (2023). Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region, EIAR Scoping Methodology Report.

Uisce Éireann (2024). Project Summary Report.