
PL - DM - SID - ACP-324280-26 Gas Networks Ireland

From John McGearty <John.McGearty@meathcoco.ie>

Date Tue 7/7/2026 4:43 PM

To SIDS <sids@pleanala.ie>

Cc Jane Reilly <jreilly@meathcoco.ie>; Avril Young <avril.young@meathcoco.ie>; Chris Rourke <chris.rourke@meathcoco.ie>

 1 attachment (2 MB)

ACP-324280-26 - Planning Submission Report.pdf;

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Please find attached the response from Meath County Council in relation to the above-mentioned SID application, ACP-324280-26 – Gas Networks Ireland.

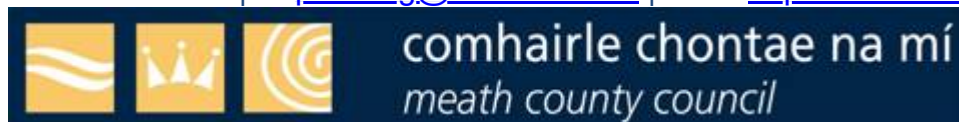
Kind regards,

John

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DEVELOPMENT UNDER SECTION 182C OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 – 2023

Meath County Council Planning Submission Report

to

An Coimisiún Pleanála

Reference: ACP-324280-26

Proposed Development:

The proposed development of a new downstream underground high pressure gas pipeline, the provision of an offtake installation compound, and an above ground installation (AGI) compound and associated development, including associated access arrangements, landscaping and all ancillary works.

Location:

The proposed development is located within the following townlands in County Meath: Kilwarden, Aghnagillagh, Ardnamullen, Ticroghan, Park, Ballyboggan, Ballynakill, Harristown, Castlejordan, and Clongall, and in the following townlands in County Offaly: Clonmore, Roosk, Lenamarran, Jonestown, Mountwilson, Thornwell, Monasteroris, Rathmore, Drumcooly, Rathgreedan, Shean, Ballykilleen, and Esker More.

An Coimisiún Pleanála Due Date:

7th July 2026

1.0 Introduction

An application from Gas Networks Ireland seeking permission under Section 182C of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) ('PDA' hereafter) was received by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

A letter to the Planning Authority from An Coimisiún Pleanála received on the 15th January 2026 outlines that the Planning Authority submission on an application for approval under Section 182C of the PDA is not subject to any statutory requirement relating to the formal submission of a Chief Executive report to the Elected Members of the Council prior to making a submission to the Coimisiún. Such a statutory requirement only applies to applications for planning permission under Section 37E of the PDA.

An Coimisiún Pleanála still requires the Planning Authority to provide a submission to the Commission on a broad range of topics to be attached in the event that planning permission is granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála

This report begins by outlining the location of the site and describes the proposed development. Relevant national, regional and local and planning policies are then outlined, internal reports are listed and a brief planning assessment of the proposal is provided.

2.0 Site Location

The proposed development consists of a downstream underground gas transmission pipeline to connect the existing BGE77 Dublin to Galway gas transmission pipeline to the Edenderry Power Plant. This gas transmission pipeline will have an overall length of c. 23.65km. The proposed development also includes an offtake installation compound at Kilwarden, Co. Meath, to accommodate infrastructure connecting the proposed pipeline with the existing BGE77 pipeline, along with equipment to facilitate the inspection and maintenance of the proposed pipeline. The application site has an area of c. 243.4 hectares, encompassing the pipeline route, temporary works areas, pipe storage / construction compounds, and the proposed offtake installation and above ground installation (AGI) compounds.

The proposed development is located within the following townlands in County Meath:

- Kilwarden
- Aghnagillagh
- Ardnamullen
- Ticroghan,
- Park
- Ballyboggan
- Ballynakill
- Harristown

- Castlejordan
- Clongall

A substantial portion of the proposed works relate to lands within the boundary of County Offaly. The proposed underground steel gas transmission pipeline will extend south/south-west from the offtake installation compound at Kilwarden, Co. Meath and will continue down, traversing listed townlands. The gas transmission will then enter the boundary of Co. Offaly and continue southwards, before terminating at the proposed AGI compound at Ballykilleen, Co. Offaly.

The proposed underground gas transmission pipeline exclusively traverses land zoned 'RA – Rural Area' as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The aim of this land use zoning designation is *'to protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture, forestry and sustainable rural-related enterprise, community facilities, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage'*.

There are five temporary construction / pipe storage compounds proposed to facilitate development. Temporary construction compound 1 is located at the townland of Kilwarden, Co. Meath, temporary compound 2 is located at the townland of Ardnamullan, Co. Meath, temporary compound 3 is located at Monasteroris, Co. Offaly, temporary compound 4 is at Esker More, Co. Offaly, and temporary compound 5 is at Ballykilleen, Co. Offaly. Accordingly, 2 no. of the proposed temporary construction / pipe storage compounds will be in County Meath. These compounds will accommodate site offices, crane and truck parking, pipe storage, secure lock up containers, car parking, material laydown areas, welfare facilities and material storage areas during the construction stage.

The proposed AGI compound will be located entirely within the boundaries of County Offaly. The proposed offtake installation compound in Kilwarden will be accessed off a laneway from the R161 regional road. It will accommodate the live hot-tape connection to the existing 750 mm BGE77 Dublin to Galway gas transmission pipeline. The installation development will include a below-ground isolation valve located within an access pit, in addition to above-ground pipework and connection points for a temporary pipeline inspection gauging (PIG) trap to facilitate future inspection and maintenance of the proposed pipeline.

All proposed works in County Meath that are related to the development are in the south-west of the county. These works take place entirely in the South West Lowlands, a designated Lowland Landscape character type in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 of High Value and High Sensitivity. The proposed development does not conflict with any Protected Views or Prospects, as designated in Appendix A. 10 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, nor does it infringe on any designated Architectural Conservation Areas. The relevant sites are not located within the curtilage of, or in close proximity to a Protected Structure. The site is not within consultation distance for any SEVESO sites, and there are no Special Area Amenity Order's relating to the site.

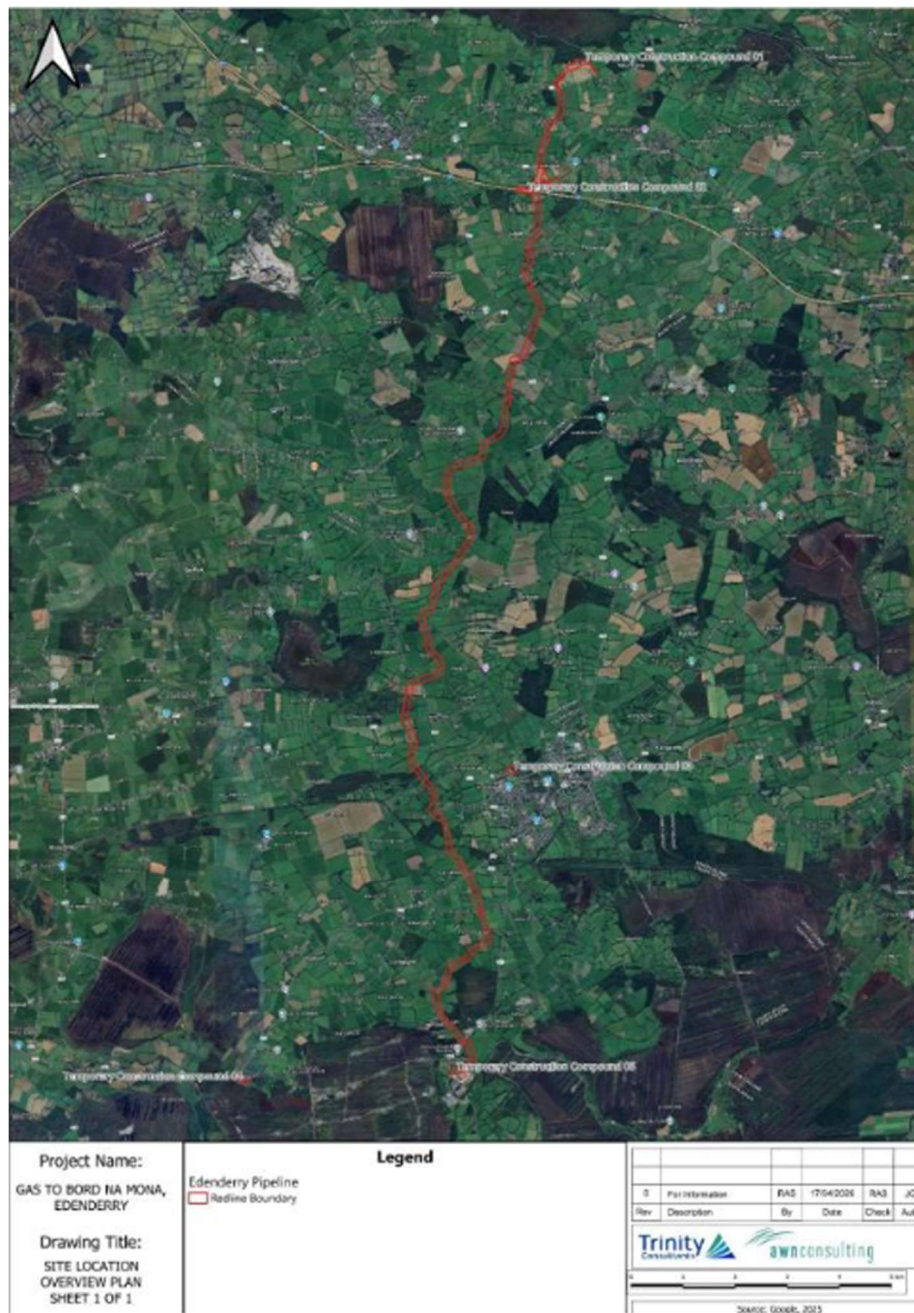


Fig.1: Proposed Gas Transmission Pipeline Route Aerial Image (source-planning application)

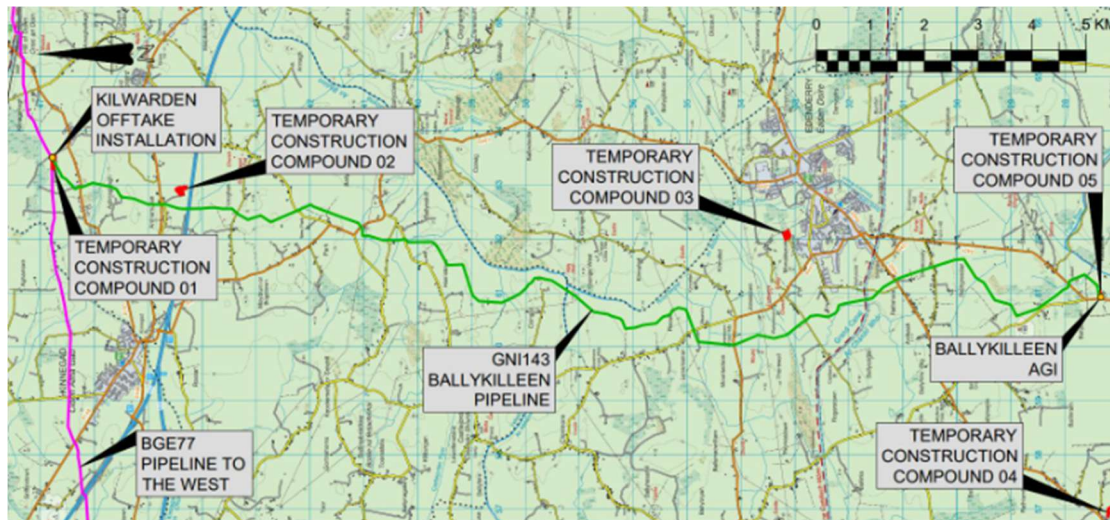


Fig. 2: Map of Proposed Transmission Line Route (source-Planning Application)

3.0 Development Description

The following development description has been extracted from the planning application in the interest of completeness.

The proposed development is described as follows in the public notices;

"The proposed development primarily comprises the provision of a new downstream underground high pressure gas pipeline, the provision of an offtake installation compound, and an above ground installation (AGI) compound and associated development, including associated access arrangements, landscaping and ancillary works.

The proposed development is located within the following townlands in County Meath: Kilwarden, Aghnagillagh, Ardnamullen, Ticroghan, Park, Ballyboggan, Ballynakill, Harristown, Castlejordan, and Clongall, and in the following townlands in County Offaly: Clonmore, Roosk, Lenamarran, Jonestown, Mountwilson, Thornwell, Monasteroris, Rathmore, Drumcooly, Rathgreedan, Shean, Ballykilleen, and Esker More.

The proposed 300mm steel underground gas transmission pipeline will cover a distance of c. 23.65km. The application site has an area of c. 243.4 hectares, including the pipeline route, temporary works areas, pipe storage / construction compounds, and the proposed offtake installation and AGI compounds. The proposed pipeline will be a strategic downstream gas pipeline.

The proposed development comprises an underground steel gas transmission pipeline extending south from the proposed offtake installation at the townland of Kilwarden. The pipeline continues south/southwest through the following townlands in County Meath, at Kilwarden, Aghnagillagh, Ardnamullen, Ticroghan, Park, Ballyboggan, Ballynakill, Harristown, Castlejordan, Clongall. From this point, the transmission pipeline enters County Offaly and proceeds southwards through the following townlands, Clonmore, Roosk, Lenamarran, Jonestown, Mountwilson, Thornwell,

Monasteroris, Rathmore, Drumcooly, Rathgreedan, Shean, Ballykilleen. The pipeline runs to the west of the River Boyne and the settlement of Edenderry, and terminates at the proposed AGI at Ballykilleen.

Five temporary construction / pipe storage compounds are proposed. Temporary construction compound 1 is located at the townland of Kilwarden, adjacent to the proposed Kilwarden Offtake Installation. Temporary construction compound 2 is located at the townland of Ardnamullan, adjacent to the linear pipeline route.

Temporary construction compound 3 is located within the townland of Monasteroris, positioned to the east of the pipeline corridor. Temporary construction compound 4 is located to the west of the pipeline terminus within the townland of Esker More.

Temporary construction compound 5 is located in the townland of Ballykilleen, adjacent to the proposed Ballykilleen AGI. The compounds will accommodate site offices, crane and truck parking, pipe storage, secure lock up containers, car parking, material laydown areas, welfare facilities and material storage areas during the construction stage.

The proposed AGI compound is to be located on lands at Ballykilleen (within the Edenderry Power Station site) and will include a Pressure Reducing Skid (PRS) Kiosk (with a gross floor area (GFA) of c. 49 sq.m. with a parapet height of 3.15m and vent terminations 5.4m in height.), a Packaged Boiler Unit (PBU) Kiosk (with a GFA of c. 23.4 sq.m. with a parapet height of 3.7m and boiler flues extending to 5.67m in height), a Gas Analyser Kiosk (with a GFA of c. 7 sq.m and with a parapet height of c. 2.9m. and vent terminations extending to 3.5m in height) and an E&I Kiosk (with a GFA of c. 15.75 sq.m. and with a parapet height of c. 3m.). Solar PV panels are provided on the roof of the PBU Kiosk. The AGI compound will be enclosed by a 2.4m high palisade security fence, with a 1.2m high open mesh boundary fence.

The proposed Kilwarden Offtake Installation will be accessed off a laneway from the existing R161 Regional Road. The Kilwarden Offtake Installation will accommodate the live 'hot-tap' connection to the existing 750 mm Dublin-Galway pipeline (PTTW), enabling the new 300 mm transmission pipeline to be connected without interruption to the existing network.

The Installation will include a below-ground isolation valve located within an access pit, and above-ground pipework and connection points for a temporary PIG (pipeline inspection gauging) trap to facilitate future inspection and maintenance of the proposed pipeline. The compound will be enclosed by a 2.4 m high palisade security fence, with a 1.2 m stock-proof fence installed along the external boundary.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a Natura Impact Statement have been prepared and will be submitted in respect of this application."

4.0 Planning History

The following planning history pertains to the application lands;

- **TA30418: P Conlon** - Bungalow, mini treatment plant and raised percolation area. *Refused 09.01.2004*
- **891021: Michael Flynn** - Erect a bungalow and septic tank. *Refused 18.08.1989*
- **TA170444: Jody Quirke** - Development will consist of the construction of a storey and a half type dwelling house, detached garage/fuel store, vehicular entrance, installation of an effluent "treatment system/polishing filter and all other associated site works. Significant Further Information/ Revised plans submitted on this application. *Granted subject to 15 conditions 28.08.2017*
- **TA70695: Rosaleen O'Rafferty** - Erect new extension to existing dwelling house, new garage and ancillary site works. *Refused 14.02.2008*
- **89764: Rosaleen O'Rafferty** - Alterations to the roof and extension to kitchen. *Granted subject to conditions 07.09.1989*
- **0075: Pdraig O'Rafferty** - One dwelling house. *Refused 09/05/2000*
- **21854: Geraldine Begley** - To construct a new storey and a half type dwelling house, domestic garage, upgrade of existing agricultural entrance to a new vehicular entrance, proprietary wastewater treatment plant & raised soil polishing filter area and all associated ancillary site services. *Refused 08/09/2021*
- **96510: Kevin O'Rafferty** – To retain extension to gateway. *Granted subject to 2 conditions 06.08.1996*
- **TA101046: John Connolly** - Construction of extension's to the side and to the rear of existing dwelling, amendments to front elevation and all associated site works on this site at Ardnamullan, Clonard, Co Meath. Retention permission is also sought for storage shed on this property. *Granted subject to 6 conditions. 24.01.2011*
- **2560280: Sinead Farrelly** - Permission is sought to retain several existing structures: 1. Permission is sought to retain an existing First floor in an existing dwelling (163.7 sqm). It consists of 2 bedrooms, ensuite bathroom, storage and attic storage. 2. An existing single storey and attic space Garage (62.9 sqm) positioned on the Northeast of the site. 3. An existing structure (139.12 sqm) for the purpose of storage facilities positioned on the Northeast of the site and all associated site works at the above address. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application. *Granted subject to 8 conditions. 30.07.2025*
- **TA20349: Claire Nearly** - 1 No. bungalow type dwelling and detached garage with septic tank and percolation area. *Granted subject to 12 conditions 22.01.2003*

- **TA70352: Brandon Leech** - To erect new slatted shed, new dungstead, new cattle handling facility and ancillary site works. *Granted subject to 9 conditions 17.10.2007*
- **TA151056: Clodagh Lynch** - The development will consist of the following: renovation of existing cottage, construction of two storey and single storey extensions to the rear, new proprietary wastewater sewage treatment system with percolation area to EPA Code of Practice, garage, modifications to existing entrance, landscaping and all ancillary site works. *Granted subject to 5 conditions 15.01.2016*
- **971395: Deeclan Leech** - To build bungalow, domestic garage and septic tank. *Granted subject to 11 conditions 03.03.1998*
- **TA60625: Ross O'Connor** - Construct dormer bungalow, domestic garage, septic tank, Oakstown BAF Sewerage Treatment System and percolation area. *Granted subject to 12 conditions 20/02/2007*
- **TA70098: Ross O'Connor** - Change of house design and variations to site layout plan, from that previously granted under planning reference TA/60625. *Refused 19.04.2007*
- **931118: Charles Clancy** - Erection of two storey dwelling house and septic tank. *Granted subject to 14 conditions 15.02.1994*
- **TA800556: Sarah Payne** - A new two storey dwelling with new entrance and new effluent treatment system and associated site works. *Refused 21.04.2008*
- **TA802953: Sarah Payne** - A new two-storey dwelling with new entrance and new effluent system and associated site works. *Refused 09.12.2008*
- **TA70226: Brendan Lucey** - Erect a new slatted shed and ancillary site works. *Granted subject to 14 conditions 08.08.2007*

5.0 Pre-Planning Consultation

Pre-applications meetings took place with Meath County Council on 26/09/2024, along with:

- Kildare County Council – 26/09/2024
- Westmeath County Council – 21/03/2025
- Offaly County Council – 09/04/2025

These meetings discussed alternative proposed routes for the gas transmission pipelines which could have included land from Kildare or Westmeath.

The applicant undertook a pre-planning application consultation with An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 30/01/2025. The purpose of this consultation was to provide An Coimisiún Pleanála with further information to assist in determining if the development constituted a Strategic Infrastructure Development.

The Commission Inspector's report on the pre-application request concluded that the development would constitute a Strategic Gas Infrastructure Development and stated the following:

“Based on the foregoing assessment, it can be concluded that the proposed development would meet the definition of ‘strategic gas infrastructure development’ set out in Section 182(c)(1) of the PDA and ‘strategic downstream gas pipeline’ set out in Section 2 of the PDA. It can also be concluded that the development is of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of Section 37A(2)(a) and 37A (2)(b) of the PDA.

It is recommended that the Commission serve a notice on the prospective applicant. Pursuant to Section 182 (C) of the PDA stating that it is of the opinion that the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure development within the meaning of Section 182(C) of the PDA.”

6.0 Relevant Planning Policy

6.1 National Planning Policy

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF) was adopted on 29/05/18 and sets the national policy context. The Framework as reviewed and duly updated in 2025.

In reference to energy security the NPF states the natural gas will play a key role in support of the transition to a more renewable energy system. It highlights the importance of renewable hydrogen along with Irelands target to produce 5.7TWh of indigenous biomethane by 2030.

National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 8: Supports the transition to a carbon-neutral and climate-resilient society, emphasizing the need to develop and upgrade the national electricity grid to meet increasing demand and support renewable energy.

National Policy Objective 71: Specifically supports the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure.

6.2 Climate Action Plan 2025

Highlights the need for grid enhancements to reduce emissions, meet increasing electricity demand, and support renewable energy generation.

The CAP includes a series of measures to support Ireland's renewables programme, including the accelerated delivery of onshore wind, offshore wind, and solar through a competitive framework to reach 80% of electricity demand from renewable energy by 2030. It reflects the Government's commitment to develop transformational policies, measures, and actions required to meet the electricity sector's carbon budget programme and sectoral emissions ceilings, while also recognising the critical role electricity will play in the decarbonisation of other sectors including heat, transport and industry.

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) outlines key targets for the electricity sector. The Carbon budget for the 2026-2030 period is 20 MtCO₂eq. The CAP also sets a target of “At least 2 GW” of power generated from “New Flexible Gas Plant”.

6.3 Regional Planning Policy

Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031

The EMRA RSES states the need to facilitate development of new transmission infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

RPO 10.20: Supports the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies along with associated networks to serve the existing and future needs of the region.

6.4 Local Planning Policy

Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021-2027

Infrastructure Strategy (Chapter 6): Emphasises the importance of upgrading electricity infrastructure to support economic growth and meet future demand.

Relevant Policies and Objectives:

INF POL 20: Requires a Flood Risk Assessment to be carried out for any development proposal where a flood risk may be an issue.

INF POL 46: Supports the development of enhanced electricity and gas networks and integration of renewable energy proposals.

INF POL 47: Encourages cooperation with energy providers to ensure adequate power capacity for business and enterprise needs.

INF POL 48: Ensures energy infrastructure follows best practices to minimize environmental impact.

INF POL 50: Requires local energy services such as electricity to be undergrounded where appropriate.

INF POL 51: Seeks to avoid lands proximate to public transport corridors being sterilized when future energy transmission pipelines are being designed and provided.

INF OBJ 39: To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy via facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as bio-energy at suitable locations where such developments do not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment.

INF OBJ 50: Seeks the delivery of transmission network upgrades to facilitate renewable energy connections.

Other Relevant Local Policy

ED OBJ 5: To work with infrastructure providers to facilitate the provision of services that accommodate future economic growth of the county.

ED OBJ 70: to engage with relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing 'green' approaches to economic development.

Land Use Zoning

The portion of the underground pipeline located within Meath County Council along with the Killwarden Offtake Installation are both in lands zoned as RA "Rural Area".

The objective of Rural Areas is:

"To protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture, forestry and sustainable rural-related enterprise, community facilities, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage."

Guidance for RA zoned lands is as follows:

"The primary objective is to protect and promote the value and future sustainability of rural areas. Agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural related resource enterprises will be employed for the benefit of the local and wider population. A balanced approach involving the protection and promotion of rural biodiversity, promotion of the integrity of the landscape, and enhancement of the built and cultural heritage will be adopted."

The proposed development fits within the permissible uses for the zoning as "Sustainable Energy Installations" and "Utility Structures".

Section 6.15.4 of the development plan highlights the importance of electricity and gas as the two main energy sources for the county. The plan also supports upgrading the existing networks.

"The two main energy sources currently serving the County are electricity and gas. The County's location within the Greater Dublin Area together with the potential for significant economic and supporting residential development within the Plan period demonstrates the importance of ensuring that the existing networks can be upgraded and can provide enhanced capacity. This capacity is essential to facilitate the future development of the County in line with the Core and Settlement Strategies."

7.0 Internal Referrals

The application was referred to the following Internal Sections/Departments of Meath County Council in assessment of this Strategic Infrastructure Development application;

Transportation Section – General	Report received, no objection subject to conditions.
Transport Section – Public Lighting	Report received, no objection subject to conditions.
Environment Section (Flooding – Surface Water)	Report received, no objection subject to conditions.
Conservation	No response received.

The full text of all internal reports is attached/contained in Appendix 1.

8.0 Planning Assessment

In summary, the main planning considerations for this Strategic Infrastructure Development are as follows:

- Principle of Development / Planning Policy
- Siting, Design & Layout
- Access, Traffic & Parking
- Water Services & Drainage
- Cultural Heritage
- Appropriate Assessment / AA
- Environmental Impact Assessment / EIA
- Ecology

8.1 Principle of Development/Planning Policy

The proposed underground gas transmission pipeline exclusively traverses land zoned 'RA – Rural Area' as per the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The aim of this land use zoning designation is 'to protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture, forestry and sustainable rural-related enterprise, community facilities, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage'. Permitted uses in this zoning category include sustainable energy installations and utility structures.

In terms of the purpose and requirements surrounding the application, the Planning Authority understands that the Edenderry Power Plant is located at Ballykilleen, Co. Offaly and the proposed underground gas pipeline is intended to connect the power plant to the existing high-pressure Dublin to Galway gas pipeline. This is to facilitate the transition of the power station (which is currently operated as an oil-fired power plant) to natural gas. The power station is owned and operated by Bord na Móna. The transition of the power plant to natural gas will result in significant improvement in the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from the power station's operation, due to the lower carbon intensity of electricity generated from natural gas. The connection of the power station to the gas grid will also allow for the power station to avail of the continued decarbonisation of the gas grid mix, through the ongoing integration of biomethane, and the future introduction of hydrogen gas.

The gas transmission pipeline route traverses lands designated in the MCDP as being 'Strong Rural' to the northern section of the proposed pipeline, followed by an area designation of 'Low Development Pressure Area' to the southern portion of the route.

INF POL 46 in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 outlines the policy of the Council to support and facilitate the development of gas networks to serve the needs of the County, in addition to stipulating policy *'to facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that may be brought forward during the lifetime of the plan including the delivery and integration, including linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner'*. Section 6.15.4.1 of the Plan highlights the County's location and growth potential as

demonstrating the importance of ensuring that existing gas networks can be upgraded and can provide enhanced capacity.

Overall, the principle of development for the application, consisting of the provision of an underground high pressure gas pipeline, offtake installation compound and associated development, is considered acceptable, subject to other assessment and relevant conditions.

Accordingly, the principle of development of this infrastructure is considered acceptable in the context of zoning applied to the development lands, subject to compliance with all other relevant planning and environmental criteria which will be further assessed herein.

8.2 Siting, Design and Layout

The proposed 300mm steel underground gas transmission pipeline will cover a distance of c. 23.65km. The application site has an area of c. 243.4 hectares in totality, including the pipeline route, temporary works areas, pipe storage / construction compounds, and the proposed offtake installation and AGI compounds.

The proposed development includes 5 no. temporary construction compounds as shown on Figures 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8. These compounds will provide for the storage of materials to construct the pipeline during the construction phase of the project.

Kilwarden Compound

In terms of Meath County, the first storage compound is located to the north of the R161 within the townland of Kilwarden and is accessed via a laneway.



Fig 3: Existing lands for proposed Kilwarden compound

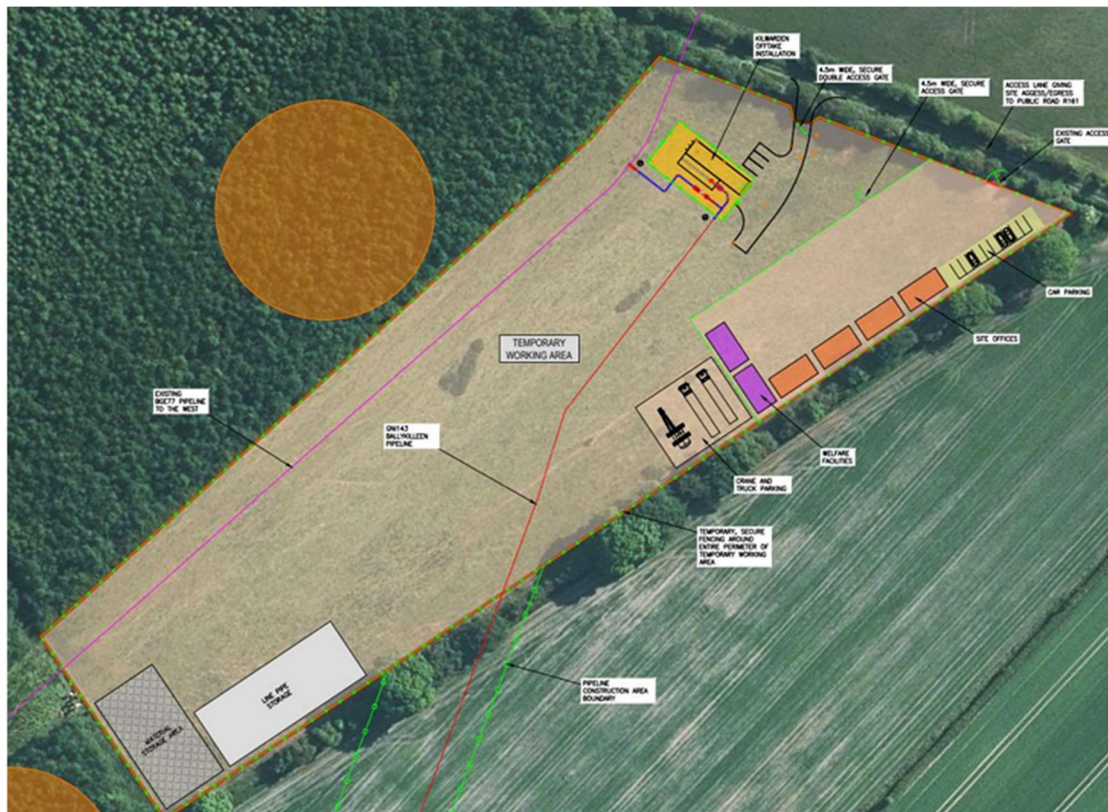


Fig 4: Proposed site layout of temporary Kilwarden compound

The compound is to be enclosed by a 2.4 m high palisade security fence, with a 1.2 m stock-proof fence installed along the external boundary to maintain agricultural land separation. The compound will be accessed from an existing laneway off the R161. The entrance off the laneway will include including localised widening, surface upgrades, and installation of a culvert over the existing drainage ditch along the laneway, all to accommodate construction vehicles and long term GNI operational access.

Three designated parking spaces will be provided adjacent to the entrance gates, with additional parking available within the compound when required for maintenance operations.

An onsite drainage system will allow for removal of surface water from areas of hardstanding within the compound and the site access route. A soakaway pit will be provided in the southeastern corner of the compound to facilitate infiltration and manage surface water runoff, connecting to an existing drainage ditch on site. The applicant states that siting of the compound has been proposed whilst having regard to residential amenity and separation distance.

In terms of screening and integration with the area, the landscaping proposal submitted by the applicant provides for a wildflower meadow surrounding the proposed compound. A grass verge is proposed along the road and around the offtake compound. The majority of the existing hedgerow on site is to be maintained.

Ardnamullen Compound

The second temporary construction compound is located to the north of the M4 within the townland of Ardnamullen. The compound is accessed via a laneway off the R148 and includes for offices, crane and truck parking, pipe storage, secure lock up containers, car parking, material laydown area, welfare facilities, material storage area.

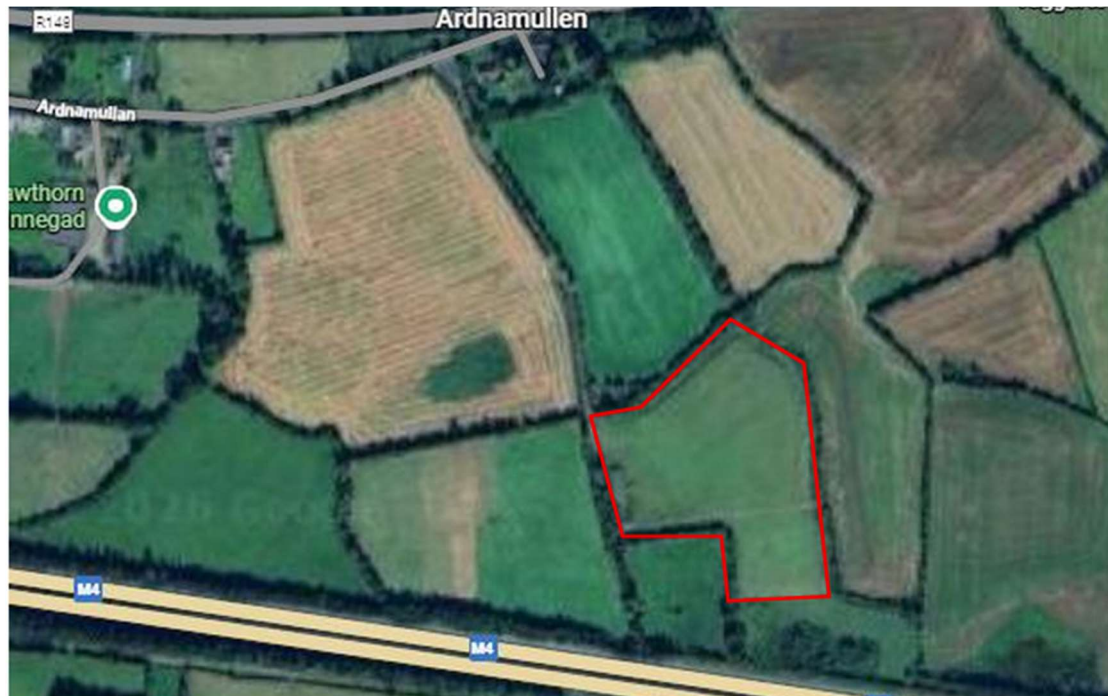


Fig 5: Existing lands for proposed Ardnamullen compound



Fig 6: Existing lands for proposed Ardnamullen compound

Temporary construction compound 2 is located at Ardnamullan, Co. Meath. The site is surrounded by agricultural land, with the R148 regional road further north of the site. The site is proposed to be accessed through an access lane, providing access/egress to the R148. An 8m wide secure double access gate is proposed to give access to the site, with a proposed internal hardcore access road around the compound along with temporary secure fencing around the entire perimeter of the site.

The site layout plans make provision for a designated parking area, site offices, welfare facilities, secure lock up containers, bend storage area material storage area and material laydown area, along with designated areas for temporary pipe storage. The location of existing services within the proposed temporary construction compound is indicative only, subject to change to be determined by relevant contractor.

Transmission Pipeline

The proposed gas transmission pipeline will be steel and will have a 300mm nominal bore. It will be laid a minimum of 1.2m below ground level, with greater separation subject to external conditions – road crossing, 3rd party service crossing, etc. The gas pipeline will have a maximum operating pressure of 85 bar. A trenchless installation method will be utilised to install the gas transmission pipeline under the two primary river crossings, at the River Boyne Tributary and the Yellow River. Along with this, the pipeline will be installed across minor watercourses using open cut methods. The pipeline surround material is to be agreed with the site engineer based on examination of sample.

It is not considered that the siting, layout and design of either of the proposed temporary construction compounds will negatively impact the proper planning of the area, subject to other assessment and the attachment of appropriate conditions.

In summation, the total extent of the siting, design and layout of any proposed works within the boundary of Co. Meath are considered acceptable and not overly injurious to the visual amenity and proper planning and sustainable development of the area, contingent on complete assessment of the application and the imposition of relevant planning conditions, to include full and proper implementation of the Landscaping Plan submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

8.3 Access, Traffic & Parking

The application was referred to the Transport Department, where it was noted that the proposed development commences in Kilwarden, Co. Meath, is predominately off-line but crosses the following roads - R161, R148, L-80217, L-40181, L-8022, R-401, L-80241, L-4019 in Co. Meath. Transportation have stated 'no objection' to the proposed development subject to conditions upon a grant by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

The conditions requested by the Transportation Department have been provided under Section 13.0 of this Report.

In addition, it is considered that the construction phase of the development shall have regard to the management of construction traffic and provide details pertaining to haulage routes, traffic control / temporary traffic arrangements and HGV turning facilities. The Planning Authority is of the view that the applicant should as a matter of

course provide a Construction Traffic Management Plan for the construction phase by way of a condition upon any grant issued by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Finally, it is the view of the Planning Authority that the applicant will be required to demonstrate sightlines from the proposed entrances of both the Kilwarden and Ardnamullen compounds of 90 metres to the nearside edge of the road from a setback of 2.4 metres, in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060. The nearside road edge shall be visible over the entire sight distance. Where works are required to provide unobstructed sightlines, they shall be identified in a revised site layout and included within the red line boundary. Where works are required in third party lands, written consent from the landowner shall be submitted.

The conditions requested by Transport-Public Lighting will be applied upon any future determination by An Coimisiún Pleanála that the proposed development may proceed.

Public Lighting

The application for the proposed development was referred internally to the Transport (public lighting) section. The report received noted no information received relating to external lighting in the development. Accordingly, if any external lighting is to be included a lighting design is required that mitigated against obtrusive light. Obtrusive light being: skyglow, glare and light trespass. The design shall include a lighting contour drawing that shows the impact of the lighting on the surrounding areas. The lighting shall be designed and installed as per “Meath County Councils; Public Lighting Technical Specifications & Requirements” document.

The concerns included in the report from the Transport (public lighting) section are noted and can be attached as a condition in the event of grant by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

The conditions requested by Transport-Public Lighting will be applied upon any future determination by An Coimisiún Pleanála that the proposed development may proceed.

8.4 Water Services & Drainage

Proposals were referred to Meath County Council's Environment (Flooding – Surface Water) Section for review. Comments returned with regard to Flood Risk and Surface Water Treatment & Disposal are set out below.

Flooding

Re above application and from a Flood Risk Management perspective and with reference to the DOEHLG / OPW publication ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities:

The applicant is requesting permission for the installation of a new underground high pressure gas pipeline, the provision of an offtake installation compound and an above ground installation (AGI) which is classified as a ‘highly vulnerable development’.

With reference to Meath County Council's MapInfo flood mapping and the OPW CFRAMS and NIFM flood mapping for the relevant area, the proposed development is

mostly located in Flood Zone C for fluvial flooding i.e. the probability of flooding is less than 0.1% and therefore at low risk of flooding, but has localised areas that are in close proximity to watercourses that are partially situated in Flood Zone A where the probability of flooding is greater than 1% from fluvial flooding; i.e. it is at high risk of flooding and Flood Zone B where the probability of flooding is between 0.1% and 1% from fluvial flooding; i.e. it is at medium risk of flooding. The aforementioned guidelines call for a 'Justification test' to rigorously assess the appropriateness or otherwise of the proposed development. The guidelines are specific in what is required to be submitted in this regard.

The applicant has submitted a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) and I have reviewed same. The applicant has applied the Justification Test as required by the Guidelines. It is noted that the proposed development will not result in an increase in flooding elsewhere or floodplain loss due to the underground nature of development. The applicant shall submit details of all watercourse crossings (pipeline depths, separation distance etc.) for the written agreement of the Planning Authority before the commencement of development on the site.

A number of flood risk/water quality mitigation measures to be undertaken at construction stage have been outlined in Section 5.2 of the submitted SSFRA and in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and shall be implemented during the construction stage. The applicant shall ensure that all pipe joints/connections are located outside flood zones A & B. The pipe trenching detail shall be submitted to the written agreement of the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the proposed development and shall include impervious plugs so that the proposed trench does not act as a natural channel for groundwater or increase localised flooding elsewhere.

From a flood risk perspective, I have no objections to the proposed development subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall implement all recommendations and requirements stated in the Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA).
2. The applicant shall ensure that the ground will restore to its original levels to avoid any alteration to the existing flood plain.
3. The applicant shall ensure that excavated material/spoil heaps are not stored within the identified Flood Zones A & B.
4. Prior to commencement of any of the subject development, the applicant shall submit details of all watercourse crossings (pipeline depths, separation distance etc.) for the written agreement of the Planning Authority before the commencement of development on the site. Any crossings shall seek approval from the OPW if required.
5. Prior to commencement of any of the subject development, the applicant shall submit pipe trenching detail to the written agreement of the Planning Authority and shall include clay plugs so that the proposed trench does not act as a natural channel for groundwater or increase localised flooding elsewhere.
6. Flood risk/water quality mitigation measures to be undertaken at construction stage have been outlined in the submitted SSFRA and in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and shall be implemented during the construction stage.

Surface Water Treatment & Disposal

Should planning be granted for this proposed development the following issues shall be addressed to the written satisfaction of Meath County Council Environment Flooding-Surface Water Section prior to commencing development on site:

1. Prior to the commencement of any of the development on site, the applicant shall provide confirmation whether or not the existing on-site drainage system at Ballykilleen has the capacity to cater for additional surface water runoff from the proposed development.
2. All surface water from the proposed development shall discharge to a suitably sized soakaway that is in accordance with the requirements of BRE365. No surface water shall discharge directly to an existing drainage ditch/watercourse.
3. As per the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study, Volume 3 Environmental Management, soakaways shall not be constructed within 5 metres of the foundations of the buildings or under a road and adequately sized to cater for the site.
4. All surface water design/work shall comply fully with the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) Regional Drainage Policies Volume 2, for New Developments.
5. All surface water design/work shall comply fully with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works Volume 6.

8.5 Culture & Heritage

The applicant has included in the EIAR, a chapter on 'Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage', a review of which has been undertaken by the Planning Authority.

There are no recorded architectural heritage sites within the proposed development corridor. There are seven within the study area, all of which are listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and the Record of Protected Structures of Counties Meath. A portion of the proposed development corridor will traverse demesne features associated with Park House, as depicted in the historic first edition Ordnance Survey map dating to the early 19th century and demesne features associated with Harristown House, as depicted on the historic 25-inch Ordnance Survey map dating to the late 19th / early 20th century. Park House is not listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage or the Record of Protected Structures for Co. Meath.

Harristown House (NIAH No. 14404601; RPS No. 91460) and farmyard complex (NIAH No. 14404602; RPS No. 91461) are listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and the Record of Protected Structures for Co. Meath, but as noted above, are not within the Proposed Development corridor and will not be impacted, directly or indirectly, by the Proposed Development.

The submitted report indicates that a field survey was undertaken of the areas of archaeological potential along the Proposed Development corridor. The Areas of Archaeological Potential were walked as part of the geophysical survey undertaken by the engaged archaeological consultant. In addition to a general field walking survey of the landscape along the Proposed Development corridor, all water courses

corresponding to townland boundaries were assessed. In terms of Areas of Archaeological Potential the following areas have been indicated within the report submitted;

- AAP1 is located in the townland of Ardnamullan, which consists of pasture and tillage fields with an elevation of 72-81m Ordnance Datum (OD).
- AAP2 is located in the townland of Ticroghan, which consists of pasture fields with some areas of rough ground and has an elevation of 74-79m Ordnance Datum (OD).

From an archaeological perspective, the key characteristics of the Proposed Development relate to ground disturbance for the laying of the pipeline, and critically, top-soil stripping for the temporary access and infrastructure required to support the Proposed Development.

Potential impacts on archaeological and cultural heritage associated with the Proposed Development involves ground disturbance associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. Should archaeological remains survive below surface, then ground disturbance in these areas would remove subsurface features. Potential impacts on architectural heritage consist of the portions of the Proposed Development corridor that will traverse demesne features associated with Park House and Harristown House.

The report notes that 'should archaeological or architectural heritage features survive, then without mitigation, the impact will be negative, moderate and permanent'.

Mitigation Measures Proposed

The report outlines that a suitably qualified archaeological consultant will be appointed to oversee the project from design through to planning and construction phase.

A geophysical survey of the Proposed Development, under license to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, will be completed across the entire route planning corridor.

Given the cultural significance of sacred trees in Ireland, the hawthorn tree identified in Ticroghan townland will be avoided and fenced off for the duration of the construction phase to protect it, and its root bed, from harm.

Pre-development archaeological testing, under license to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, will be undertaken in advance of construction, as follows:

- Trenches will largely target anomalies identified by the geophysical survey, as well as county / barony / townland boundaries. A number of trenches will also be excavated in areas where no features were highlighted (as per best practice guidelines; c. 10% of the Proposed Development corridor should be tested in total).

- Trenches will be dug by a tracked excavator equipped with a 1.8 m wide toothless ditching bucket. Each trench will be excavated to the surface of archaeological features, deposits or structures, or to the surface of the undisturbed natural soil or bedrock (typically less than 75cm). Topsoil will be removed from the test trenches in horizontal levels of not more than 0.20 m in thickness until sterile subsoil is reached.
- A suitably qualified underwater archaeology specialist will assess the following watercourses along the Proposed Development corridor (WCX02, WCX04, WCX05 and WCX19) and undertake a wade or dive survey as appropriate under license to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Should archaeological or architectural heritage features, deposits or structures be uncovered during survey will be cleaned by hand, investigated and recorded. Archaeological excavation of features, deposits or structured identified, will be undertaken in advance of construction, in consultation with and under license to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Applying these mitigation measures will ensure that the effect on the archaeology and architectural heritage will be permanent, neutral and imperceptible.

It is the view of the Planning Authority that where the above stated mitigation measures are strictly implemented, the proposed development is acceptable in the context of culture and heritage in the County of Meath.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment

This application was accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment (AA) (Screening Stage) and Natura Impact Statement, prepared by Altemar LTD. on behalf of the applicant, Gas Networks Ireland. This preliminary AA Screening found that it could not be excluded following screening that the proposed development may have a likely significant effect on the following Natura 2000 sites:

- Mount Hevey Bog SAC (002342)
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299)
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)

Therefore, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was required in respect of the effects of the project on the relevant European Sites.

An NIS is Stage 2 of the AA process. It considers the potential direct and indirect adverse effects associated with the proposed development operation and their potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites. During this process, all potential mitigation measures necessary to reduce or offset negative effects on Natura 2000 sites are considered.

The accompanying Natura Impact Assessment determined that, subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, that there is no potential for adverse effects on the integrity of the conservation interests and objectives of the listed European Sites.

This application has been referred to the Ecology Department, with the response from same set out below.

Wintering Birds

The omission of wintering bird surveys should be supported by further evidence. In this regard it should be noted that the route avoids Farmland Bird Hotspots (BirdWatch Ireland Hotspot Mapping - BirdWatch Ireland) but further evidence should be included as even grazed agricultural land can be utilised by significant numbers of wintering waders, geese and swans. If the proposed project is at a significant distance to SPAs for which waders and wintering geese and swans are QI, then that should be included in the assessment of the report and any records of low numbers of these species assessed within the EclA. Reference should also be made to the reinstatement of farmland which will ensure no significant loss of habitats for these species in the long term.

Otters

The NIS states “If otters or evidence of otters is found during pre-construction surveys, an otter management plan will be developed by the appointed ecologist. No works will commence until this plan is developed and further mitigation is implemented to ensure no impacts on otters”. In this regard, the otter management plan should be included in the NIS to ensure that the mitigation measures are assessed prior to consent. Whilst it is understood the plan will be site or timing specific, sample scenarios could be included.

Kingfisher

It is noted that tributaries of the Boyne are to be crossed by the pipeline. Depending on the distance from the main channel, tributaries could be considered ex-situ habitat for this species where they nest on a nearby tributary and use the main channel to feed or visa versa. To screen out potential for significant effects to Kingfisher adequately, reference should be made to the distance of the crossing locations to the Boyne SPA and the typical territory size of Kingfisher and the suitability/ unsuitability of the crossing points for nesting/ feeding purposes with reference to scientific data.

Trenchless Methodologies

For any HDD, a full methodology and emergency response plan, informed by geotechnical surveys and ecology surveys of the crossing points (for water depth etc.) should be presented to ensure an informed decision can be made by An Coimisiún as to the likelihood/ risk of frac out or pollution event.

10.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

This application is also accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). This report identifies and addresses the potential environmental impacts of the

proposed development. As outlined in the report submitted, the proposed development is covered by the following class of development in the EIA Directive – Schedule 5 Part 2 Class 10(i) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001. This relates to development consisting of ‘Oil and gas pipeline installations and pipelines for the transport of CO2 streams for the purposes of geological storage (projects not included in Part 1 of this Schedule)’.

This EIAR provides measures for mitigating potential impacts from both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development on a range of key environmental factors. The following environmental factors were assessed:

- *Chapter 04: Human Health and Population;*
- *Chapter 05: Land, Soils and Geology;*
- *Chapter 06: Hydrology and Hydrogeology;*
- *Chapter 07: Biodiversity;*
- *Chapter 08: Air Quality;*
- *Chapter 09: Climate;*
- *Chapter 10: Noise and Vibration;*
- *Chapter 11: Landscape and Visual;*
- *Chapter 12: Archaeological and Cultural Heritage;*
- *Chapter 13: Material Assets – Traffic and Transportation;*
- *Chapter 14: Material Assets – Waste*
- *Chapter 15: Material Assets – Utilities*

In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report provided an introduction, description of the proposed development, and an assessment of alternatives as required in Annex IV (2) of the EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) and in Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The report also provides an assessment of the interaction between environmental factors as proscribed in Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, and section 171A of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Chapter 17 of the EIAR provides an overview and assessment of the cumulative impact of the proposed development, and Chapter 18 provides an overall summary of the residual effects associated with the construction and operational phases.

The Planning Authority has had regard to Chapter 12-Archaeological and Cultural Heritage at Section 8.5 above. The following considerations have also been had with regard to the submitted EIAR.

Hedgerows

The EIAR states “The loss of Low value hedgerow will have a low, adverse, not significant and short-term effect on biodiversity. The loss of Moderate value hedgerow

will have a low, adverse, not significant and short-term effect on biodiversity. The loss of High value hedgerow will have a low, adverse, not significant and short term effect on biodiversity locally”.

The total metres of hedgerows loss for each hedgerow type (low, moderate, high) should be stated and efforts should be made to ensure that suitable alternative hedgerows exists for fauna such as bats, to disperse by until replacement hedgerows have matured.

Mature trees

The mitigation measures section states “As only low vegetation and hedgerows can be planted directly above the proposed pipeline, any additional mature trees that are to be replaced will be planted in the surrounds of the offtake location. A landscape plan will be prepared by a suitably qualified landscape architect showing the location of the proposed compensatory planting around the proposed offtake location. All replacement planting will be of native stock and of local provenance for the promotion of biodiversity.” The permanent loss of all mature trees within pipeline crossings is not adequately described or assessed earlier in the document. As the trees onsite will be permanently lost a thorough assessment of the number and type and quality of trees is required.

Bats

Bats avoid gaps of greater than 5 -10 m in hedgerows and treelines (Managing-Hedgerows-for-Bats.pdf). Where substantial treelines that provide good ecological corridors are crossed (such as at Chainage 800 in Kilwarden when a mature treeline links Hevey Bog to lands south of the R161), consideration should be given to trenchless techniques to avoid impacts to mature treelines.

Ten trees with confirmed bat roosts and 3 additional trees with potential for bat roosts are scheduled for removal and a further 23 bat roosts have not yet been surveyed. In accordance Guidance on the Strict Protection of Certain Animal and Plant Species under the Habitats Directive in Ireland (NPWS, 2021), ecological surveys and Application for Regulation 54 Derogation Licence is required for the removal of these roosts and this licence should be obtained prior to consent in accordance with relevant case law (EUR-Lex - 62020CJ0463 - EN - EUR-Lex).

Rare Flora

Common Orchid

The EIAR states “A common orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) coterie (approximately 15 specimens) was noted on within this habitat on a roadside under a mature tree line at chainage 846m” within an area of Dry Meadow and Grassy Verge. Species rich meadows and grasslands have become increasingly rare in Ireland (The importance of species-rich meadows and grasslands (even mini ones!) » All-Ireland Pollinator Plan). Section 7.6.1.2 later states “Due to the location of the common orchids within the Proposed Development site, there is the potential for this species to be lost within the works area during topsoil removal, trenching and vehicular movements.”

This habitat and rare species should be considered Key Ecological Receptor and their avoidance stated within key documents such as CEMP and mitigation measures of the EIAR in accordance with the CIEEM hierarchy of mitigation (2018) and in accordance with the Policies and Objectives of the Meath County Development Plan which states;

▪ **HER POL 35**

To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.

Mitigation measures for common orchid state “The following mitigation will be applied only if it does not impact on the ability to establish a function working width to facilitate the Proposed Development”. It is considered that alternative mitigation measures should be outlined to be utilised if this method will be ineffective. Alternative mitigation measures may include the saving of this habitat in turves and careful reinstatement under the care of an ecologist post works or minor alteration of the pipe alignment to avoid rare habitat/ rare plant species.

Blue Fleabane

Table 7-6 states of the EIAR states that the rare blue fleabane plant (previously protected in Ireland now only protected in NI) was identified within Bord na Móna grounds but did not classify either as a Key Ecological Receptor. This habitat and rare species should be considered Key Ecological Receptor and their avoidance stated within key documents such as CEMP and mitigation measures of the EIAR in accordance with the CIEEM hierarchy of mitigation (2018) and in accordance with the Policies and Objectives of the Meath County Development Plan which states;

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To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.

Section 7.6.1.2 later states “In the absence of mitigation, it is highly likely that blue fleabane will be lost within the immediate vicinity of the works area as a result of vegetation removal, trenching and vehicular movements during the proposed works.”

Mitigation measures for blue fleabane rely on seed saving. In this regard, the applicant could also be requested to avoid loss or transplant turves of plants that will be lost.

Frogs and Newts

Similarly, Table 7-6 states drainage ditches and canal provide suitable habitat for frogs and newts but do not identify frogs and newts as a Key Ecological Receptor. Mitigation measures to avoid impacts, particularly during breeding season should be included in key documents.

Having regard to the above findings, it is considered that further information will be required from the applicant.

11.0 Development Contributions

Community Fund

The Planning Authority would remind the Commission of Section 182B(6) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) which, states:

“(6) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power to attach conditions, the Board may attach to an approval under subsection (5)(a), (b) or (c) a condition requiring—

- (a) The construction or financing (in whole or in part) of a facility, or*
- (b) The provision or financing (in whole or in part) of a service;*

in the area where the proposed development is situated, provided that the facility or service constitutes a substantial gain to the community”.

In this specific case, the Planning Authority supports the imposition of a condition to finance an education and awareness program on renewable energy and energy conservation for the community. This aligns with the broader goals of sustainable energy provision, addressing local energy needs, and supporting climate change initiatives

Cash Deposit for Roads

is the view of the Planning Authority that a cash deposit from the developer, to secure the reinstatement of public roads that may be damaged by construction transport coupled with an agreement empowering the Planning Authority to apply such security of part thereof to such reinstatement should be conditioned in any final grant of permission.

Section 48 Contributions

An Coimisiún Pleanála are requested to consider the contents of the Meath County Development Contribution Scheme 2024 – 2029.

12.0 Conclusion & Recommendation

Whilst the Planning Authority is of the opinion that the proposed development has largely addressed pertinent matters relating to relevant planning criteria in the context of national, regional and local planning policy, it is Meath County Council's considered recommendation that a request for further information is made by An Coimisiún Pleanála to enable a thorough determination in relation a minimal number of aspects contained within both the submitted NIS and EIAR as part of this application.

In the interim, it is the view of Meath County Council that it is not considered appropriate to detail planning conditions referred to within this report thus far due to a requirement for further information pertaining to the NIS and EIAR. It is recommended that such information and conditions will be set out and stipulated in full to An Coimisiún Pleanála at the relevant time if An Coimisiún Pleanála is of the view that the

development should proceed following a determination of any submitted further information.

Further Information to be Sought

1. The Planning Authority has reviewed the submitted NIS and requests that the applicant address the following items;
 - 1.1 The omission of wintering bird surveys should be supported by further evidence. In this regard it should be noted that the route avoids Farmland Bird Hotspots (BirdWatch Ireland Hotspot Mapping - BirdWatch Ireland) but further evidence should be included as even grazed agricultural land can be utilised by significant numbers of wintering waders, geese and swans.
 - 1.2 If the proposed project is at a significant distance to SPAs for which waders and wintering geese and swans are QI, then that should be included in the assessment of the report and any records of low numbers of these species assessed within the EclA.
 - 1.3 Reference should also be made to the reinstatement of farmland which will ensure no significant loss of habitats for these species in the long term.
 - 1.4 The NIS states "If otters or evidence of otters is found during pre-construction surveys, an otter management plan will be developed by the appointed ecologist. No works will commence until this plan is developed and further mitigation is implemented to ensure no impacts on otters". In this regard, the otter management plan should be included in the NIS to ensure that the mitigation measures are assessed prior to consent. Whilst it is understood the plan will be site or timing specific, sample scenarios could be included.
 - 1.5 It is noted that tributaries of the Boyne are to be crossed by the pipeline. Depending on the distance from the main channel, tributaries could be considered ex-situ habitat for this species where they nest on a nearby tributary and use the main channel to feed or visa versa. To screen out potential for significant effects to Kingfisher adequately, reference should be made to the distance of the crossing locations to the Boyne SPA and the typical territory size of Kingfisher and the suitability/unsuitability of the crossing points for nesting/ feeding purposes with reference to scientific data.
 - 1.6 For any HDD, a full methodology and emergency response plan, informed by geotechnical surveys and ecology surveys of the crossing points (for water depth etc.) should be presented to ensure an informed decision can be made by An Coimisiún as to the likelihood/ risk of frac out or pollution event.
2. The Planning Authority has reviewed the submitted EIAR and requests that the applicant address the following items;

Hedgerow

- 2.1 The EIAR states "The loss of Low value hedgerow will have a low, adverse, not significant and short-term effect on biodiversity. The loss of Moderate value hedgerow will have a low, adverse, not significant and short-term effect on biodiversity. The loss of High value hedgerow will have a low, adverse, not significant and short term effect on biodiversity locally". The total metres of hedgerows loss for each hedgerow type (low, moderate, high) should be advised and efforts

should be made to ensure that suitable alternative hedgerows exists for fauna such as bats, to disperse by until replacement hedgerows have matured.

Mature trees

- 2.2 The mitigation measures section states “As only low vegetation and hedgerows can be planted directly above the proposed pipeline, any additional mature trees that are to be replaced will be planted in the surrounds of the offtake location. A landscape plan will be prepared by a suitably qualified landscape architect showing the location of the proposed compensatory planting around the proposed offtake location. All replacement planting will be of native stock and of local provenance for the promotion of biodiversity.” The permanent loss of all mature trees within pipeline crossings is not adequately described or assessed earlier in the document. As the trees onsite will be permanently lost a thorough assessment of the number and type and quality of trees is requested.

Bats

- 2.3 Bats avoid gaps of greater than 5 -10 m in hedgerows and treelines (Managing-Hedgerows-for-Bats.pdf). Where substantial treelines that provide good ecological corridors are crossed (such as at Chainage 800 in Kilwarden when a mature treeline links Hevey Bog to lands south of the R161), consideration should be given to trenchless techniques to avoid impacts to mature treelines.
- 2.4 10 trees with confirmed bat roosts and 3 additional trees with potential for bat roosts are scheduled for removal and a further 23 bat roosts have not yet been surveyed. In accordance Guidance on the Strict Protection of Certain Animal and Plant Species under the Habitats Directive in Ireland (NPWS, 2021), ecological surveys and Application for Regulation 54 Derogation Licence is required for the removal of these roosts and this licence should be obtained prior to consent in accordance with relevant case law (EUR-Lex - 62020CJ0463 - EN - EUR-Lex).

Rare Flora

Common Orchid

- 2.5 The EIAR states “A common orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) coterie (approximately 15 specimens) was noted on within this habitat on a roadside under a mature tree line at chainage 846m” within an area of Dry Meadow and Grassy Verge. Species rich meadows and grasslands have become increasingly rare in Ireland (The importance of species-rich meadows and grasslands (even mini ones!) » All-Ireland Pollinator Plan). Section 7.6.1.2 later states “Due to the location of the common orchids within the Proposed Development site, there is the potential for this species to be lost within the works area during topsoil removal, trenching and vehicular movements.”
- 2.5.1 This habitat and rare species should be considered Key Ecological Receptor and their avoidance stated within key documents such as CEMP and mitigation measures of the EIAR in accordance with the CIEEM hierarchy of mitigation (2018) and

in accordance with the Policies and Objectives of the Meath County Development Plan.

- 2.5.2 Mitigation measures for common orchid state “The following mitigation will be applied only if it does not impact on the ability to establish a function working width to facilitate the Proposed Development”. It is considered that alternative mitigation measures should be outlined to be utilised if this method will be ineffective. Alternative mitigation measures may include the saving of this habitat in turves and careful reinstatement under the care of an ecologist post works or minor alteration of the pipe alignment to avoid rare habitat/ rare plant species.

Blue Fleabane

- 2.6 Table 7-6 states of the EIAR states that the rare blue fleabane plant (previously protected in Ireland now only protected in NI) was identified within Bord na Móna grounds but did not classify either as a Key Ecological Receptor. This habitat and rare species should be considered Key Ecological Receptor and their avoidance stated within key documents such as CEMP and mitigation measures of the EIAR in accordance with the CIEEM hierarchy of mitigation (2018) and in accordance with the Policies and Objectives of the Meath County Development Plan.

- 2.6.1 Section 7.6.1.2 later states “In the absence of mitigation, it is highly likely that blue fleabane will be lost within the immediate vicinity of the works area as a result of vegetation removal, trenching and vehicular movements during the proposed works.”

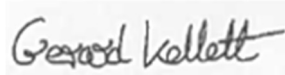
- 2.6.2 Mitigation measures for blue fleabane rely on seed saving. In this regard, the applicant could also be requested to avoid loss or transplant turves of plants that will be lost.

Frogs and Newts

- 2.7 Similarly, Table 7-6 states drainage ditches and canal provide suitable habitat for frogs and newts but do not identify frogs and newts as a Key Ecological Receptor. Mitigation measures to avoid impacts, particularly during breeding season should be included in key documents.
3. The applicant is requested to demonstrate sightlines from the proposed entrances of both the Kilwarden and Ardnamullen compounds of 90 metres to the nearside edge of the road from a setback of 2.4 metres, in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060. The nearside road edge shall be visible over the entire sight distance. Where works are required to provide unobstructed sightlines, they shall be identified in a revised site layout and included within the red line boundary. Where works are required in third party lands, written consent from the landowner shall be submitted.



Lisa Carroll
A/ Senior Executive Planner
7th July 2026



Gerard Kellett
Senior Executive Planner



Senior Planner
Alan Russell



Gareth Mc Mahon
Director of Services