



Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

**Proposed 110kV Substation and Grid Connection at
Ballyglass, Ardnacrusha, County Clare.**

Client: Reeve Wave Ltd.

July 2026

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Contents

Introduction	3
1.1 Purpose of Statement	3
Project Details	5
2.1 Description & Characteristics of Proposed Development	5
1.1.1 Site Access	5
1.1.2 Substation	6
1.1.3 Connection to National Grid	6
1.1.4 Temporary Construction Compound	7
1.1.5 Surface Water Drainage and Water Services	8
1.1.6 Site Reprofilling	8
1.1.7 Site Restoration and Landscaping	9
1.1.8 Other Planned Works	9
2.2 Description of Location of Site	10
2.3 Environmental Sensitivities	12
2.3.1 Landscape	12
2.3.2 Amenity	12
2.3.3 Biodiversity & European Sites	12
2.3.4 Traffic Impact	13
2.3.5 Noise	13
2.3.6 Heritage	14
2.3.7 Soil	14
2.3.8 Cumulative Impacts	15
2.1 Description of Aspects of the Environment likely to be affected by the project	18
2.2 Expected Residues/Emissions/Production of Waste	19
2.3 Use of Natural Resources – Soil/Land/Water/Biodiversity	19
Assessment of EIA Requirement	20
3.1 Schedule 5 Criteria	20
3.1.1 Schedule 5 'Part 1' Projects	20
3.1.2 Schedule 5 'Part 2' Projects	20
3.1.3 Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 383 of 2023)	21
Schedule 7 Screening	23
4.1 Schedule 7 Criteria	23
4.2 Construction Phase	23

4.3 Operational Phase	29
4.4 Decommissioning Phase	36
Conclusion	37
5.1 Summary	37

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Statement

This Environmental Impact Assessment Screening has been prepared by HW Planning on behalf of Reeve Wave Ltd. It accompanies an application to An Coimisiún Pleanála for the development of a proposed 110kV AIS electricity substation and associated underground grid connection to the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation at Ballyglass, Blackwater, Castlebank, Lakyle, Mountcatherine, Oakfield, Parkroe, Reanabrone, Rosmadda West and Ruanard (townlands), Ardnacrusha, County Clare. A full description of the proposed development is contained in Section 2 of this report.

The purpose of the proposed substation and grid connection is to transport the electricity generated at the Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 1 (Clare County Council Reference P22-591 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference ABP-316043-23) and Phase 2 (Clare County Council Reference P24-60485 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference PL-500253-CE-25) to the national grid via a grid connection to the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation. The applicant in both cases was Reeve Wave Ltd. Given the dual consent process associated with the separate planning applications submitted to Clare County Council for the solar array and the subject application submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála under Section 182A, the assessments presented within this application consider the proposed development in isolation. However, each technical assessment also includes a cumulative impact assessment that considers the combined effects of the proposed development together with the permitted and proposed Ballyglass solar arrays. In terms of definition, the use of the term 'solar farm project' across these reports means the project singular comprising the solar panels and support infrastructure, the substation and grid connection elements, and all associated enabling works.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the other application documents, including the Planning and Environmental Statement, the terrestrial Ecological Impact Assessment, the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement, the Aquatic Ecological Impact Assessment, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the Archaeological Impact Assessment, the Noise Impact Assessment, the Site Access Report and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

The requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has its origins in Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. This Directive has been amended three times and was codified by Directive 2011/92/EU in 2011. Directive 2011/92/EU was then subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU in 2014.

Projects requiring EIA are defined in Article 4 and set out in Annexes I and II of Directive 2014/52/EU. These provisions are in turn transposed into domestic Irish legislation through Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended ("The Regulations").

In determining the requirement for EIA, Schedule 5 differentiates between different types of projects in the context of 'project types':

- Schedule 5 'Part 1' identifies project types which are anticipated to have significant effects on the environment, and which require mandatory EIA.
- Schedule 5 'Part 2' identifies projects which do not necessarily have significant effects but for which different thresholds or other criteria are applied, and if these are met, then EIA is required. In certain cases, projects which are identified in Part 2, but which fall below those thresholds and other criteria, may also require EIA. This is determined by the outcome of a sub-threshold EIA Screening which is undertaken in accordance with Schedule 7.

Having regard to the above, the first step in the EIA process is to undertake a screening exercise to determine whether or not EIA is required for a particular project. This report considers same relative to European best practice guidance on such matters.

Article 4(4) of the Directive 2014/52/EU introduces a new Annex IIA to be used in the case of screening determinations. Annex IIA of Directive 2014/52/EU requires that the following information be provided by a developer in respect of projects listed in Annex II:

"1. A description of the project, including in particular:

a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole project and, where relevant, of demolition works.

b) a description of the location of the project, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.

2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project.

3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the project on the environment resulting from:

a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant.

b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

4. The criteria of Annex III shall be taken into account, where relevant, when compiling the information in accordance with points 1 to 3."

The above referenced Schedule 7 of The Regulations details the criteria the planning authority must consider in determining whether a sub-threshold EIA should be undertaken. This schedule is a direct transposition of Annex III of EU Directive 2011/92/EU. EU Directive 2014/52/EU provides a revised Annex III and its transposition into national legislation is mandatory. Accordingly, the pro-forma included in Section 4 of this report provides a screening statement of the proposed development against the Annex III criteria of 2014/52/EU.

Project Details

2.1 Description & Characteristics of Proposed Development

Reeve Wave Ltd. intend to apply to An Coimisiún Pleanála for permission for a proposed 110kV substation and associated underground grid connection at Ballyglass, Blackwater, Castlebank, Lakyle, Mountcatherine, Oakfield, Parkroe, Reanabrone, Rosmadda West and Ruanard (townlands), Ardnacrusha, County Clare.

The proposed development comprises of a 110 kilovolt (kV) Air-Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electrical substation, including 2 no. single-storey control buildings with staff welfare facilities, underground wastewater storage tank, all associated electrical plant, cabling, equipment and apparatus, and security fencing, within a substation compound with a total footprint of approximately 0.8 ha; 5.6 kilometre (km) 110kV underground cabling route, with 4.75km following the public road corridor and 0.85km along new proposed access track across agricultural grassland and private access tracks (including joint bays, communication and earth sheath link chambers and all ancillary works along the route); 1 no. temporary construction compound (including offices and staff welfare facilities); temporary construction and operational access from a new entrance from the L70382; Spoil management, landscaping and earthworks; Site drainage; All ancillary works and apparatus.

The development subject to this application forms part of grid connection and access arrangements which will facilitate the connection of the permitted Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 1 (Clare County Council Reference P22-591 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference ABP-316043-23) and Phase 2 (Clare County Council Reference P24-60485 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference PL-500253-CE-25) to the national grid.

This application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The proposed development works can be summarised as follows:

- Construction of new 110kV substation;
- Underground 110kV underground cable grid connection to the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation, including associated joint bays, communication chambers and earth sheath link chambers;
- Temporary construction compound;
- Provision of vehicular construction and operational entrance and access track from the L70382.
- Site drainage;
- Spoil management, landscaping and earthworks

1.1.1 Site Access

The site will be accessed for both the construction and operational phases by means of a new entrance from the L70382. The entrance will be suitably splayed and has been subject to sight line

and autotrack analysis, with the latter including modelling of abnormal load delivery for the transformer. Operational sightlines will be maintained by trimming back hedgerows with all necessary land within ownership.

A 4.5 metre wide compacted access track will extend from the entrance to the substation compound, approximately 330m in length. The access track material will be made of porous aggregate material to support percolation to ground. The autotrack analysis has demonstrated that delivery of the substation transformer can be safely accommodated.

1.1.2 Substation

The 110kV substation involves two separate compounds namely (i) the 110kV compound which will be in the ownership of ESB Network and (ii) the IPP compound which will be in the ownership of the customer. Please refer to the enclosed drawings by Reeve Wave Limited for site configuration and design layout. The main construction elements will include two substation buildings of concrete block construct with tiled roof, which will accommodate staff welfare facilities for the operational phase, High Voltage (HV) electrical equipment and associated infrastructure including palisade fences and concrete post and rail fences. The installation of HV electrical equipment will include a Transformer (TRAFO) with associated equipment along with:

- Cable Sealing End (CSE);
- Surge Arrestor (SA);
- Earth Disconnect (DA, DB, DL, DT);
- Current /Voltage Transformer (CT/VT);
- House Transformer (HoT);
- Circuit Breaker (CB);
- Lightning Masts (LM);
- Diesel Generator;
- Harmonic filters if required by EirGrid;
- Capacitor Bank if required by EirGrid;
- Underground cable trench for the grid connection to the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation comprising of 3 no. power ducts, 2 no. telecom ducts and 1 no. earth continuity ducts.

The substation compound has a total area of approx. 0.8ha. Earthworks will be undertaken so the compound is level, with a finish compound level of 44m.

1.1.3 Connection to National Grid

In order to connect to the transmission network, it is proposed to connect the proposed 110kV substation to the existing 110kV Ardnacrusha substation by means of a 110kV underground grid connection which is approximately 5.6 km in length. The cable ducts will be installed in an excavated trench, typically to a depth of 1.30m. The cable will run west from the proposed substation through private lands for 0.33km to where it will join the local road network via the L70382. The cable will run south along the L70382 for approximately 1.3km to where it meets the R463. The cable will then run

westward for circa 1.95km to where it will join the L3056. It will then travel west and south for approximately 1.45km along the L3056 until it leaves the public road corridor and enters private track. The cable continues along this track for 0.57 km before connecting with the existing Ardnacrusha substation. The exact connection point within the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation compound will be determined by ESB and EirGrid requirements.

Joint bays are required at approximately 750 metre intervals along the underground cable route to facilitate the jointing of cable lengths and comprise pre-cast concrete chambers (typically c. 2.5m x 6m x 2.05m) installed below finished ground level. Communication chambers and earth sheath link chambers will also be provided at each joint bay and approximately every second joint bay respectively, in accordance with ESB Networks and EirGrid requirements. All joint bays, communication chambers and earth sheath link chambers will be backfilled to finished ground level upon completion of cable installation, with no above-ground manifestation in the completed development.

All works will be carried out in accordance with international best practice and full compliance with health and safety requirements.

The underground cable route will involve five watercourse crossings. The crossing of the Blackwater River will be undertaken by means of Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) beneath the watercourse. The crossings of the Oakfield and West Roo watercourses will be undertaken by means of flatbed crossing methodology. All watercourse crossings will be carried out in accordance with Inland Fisheries Ireland guidelines. There is no requirement for instream works at any proposed crossing.

The construction phase of the proposed development is anticipated to take approximately 9 to 12 months to complete over an 18-month period, with construction anticipated to commence in Q3 2027 subject to the granting of planning permission. Construction activities will be carried out during normal daytime working hours of 07:00 to 19:00 hours Monday to Saturday. To ensure that optimal use is made of good weather periods or at critical periods within the programme, it may on occasion be necessary to work outside of these hours; any such out-of-hours working will be agreed in advance with Clare County Council.

Where vegetation removal is required (e.g. segments of hedgerow), this will be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season, which runs from 1st March to 31st August inclusive, in order to minimise the potential for impacts on nesting birds. Construction may commence in the September to February period so that construction activities are ongoing by the time the next bird breeding season comes around, with works continuing through that breeding season subject to the vegetation-removal restriction above.

1.1.4 Temporary Construction Compound

As outlined in the submitted site layout plans, it is proposed to provide a temporary construction compound west of the proposed substation, accessed from the entrance from the L70382. The temporary compound will include the following facilities at a minimum:

- Adequate canteen space to allow for all workers during the peak period;
- Office space with lighting, heating and internet facilities;
- Toilets and adequate welfare facilities for construction staff in accordance with the relevant statutory Health & Welfare guidelines;
- Parking space for both light and heavy vehicles;

- Designated skips and temporary storage areas.

1.1.5 Surface Water Drainage and Water Services

Surface water drainage proposals for the development have been developed to mimic the natural drainage patterns of the site and thereby be in accordance with the best management practices of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) including those set out in the SuDS Manual (C753) published by CIRIA in 2015. Specifically, this includes the following:

- The proposed access track to the substation compound will be permeable allowing rainwater to infiltrate through the stone structure to the subsoil below;
- The compound construction is formed with permeable stone thus mimicking a soakaway scenario. ESB compound stone is single sized for the first 150mm for safety purposes. It then changes to a graded 6F2 material;
- The area to be drained includes the roofs and the bunded plinths. These equate to 786.5m² which is relatively minor in comparison to the overall compound area;
- Assuming even the most basic of infiltration rates down through the permeable compound stone, it is clear that the existing greenfield situation will be easily maintained;
- The surface water generated in the hardstanding and bunded areas will discharge to soakaways via a Class 1 Full Retention Oil Separator.
- In relation to wastewater, a 5m³ foul holding tank is proposed as part of the operational development. These tanks are normally used in ESB substations. It will be emptied periodically, with the capacity in excess of modelled holding requirements.

The control buildings will include staff welfare facilities for the operational phase of the Proposed Development. Toilet facilities will be installed with a low-flush cistern and low-flow wash basin. Due to the specific nature of the proposed 110kV onsite substation, there will be a very small water requirement for occasional toilet flushing and hand washing, and therefore a potable water source is not required. It is proposed to either harvest rainwater from the roofs of the buildings or, alternatively, install a groundwater well adjacent to the proposed 110kV onsite substation in accordance with the Institute of Geologists Ireland, Guide for Drilling Wells for Private Water Supplies (IGI, 2007). The well will be flush to the ground and covered with a standard manhole. A pump house is not required as an in-well pump will direct water to a water tank within the roof space of the control building. Bottled water will be supplied for drinking, if required. Section 3 of the submitted Construction and Environmental Management Plan includes a detailed summary of surface water, waste water and water supply requirements for the proposed development.

1.1.6 Site Reprofilng

The subject site is relatively flat in nature but analysis of topographic data confirms that cutting and filling of the existing terrain will be required to establish a level platform for the substation compound. Cutting into the existing terrain and the requirement to relocate soil has been minimised by establishing the compound level to 44 m. The excavation area of the substation site is approximately 0.9 ha. It is estimated that approximately 4,600m³ of soil will need to be removed to form a level substation compound and approximately 650m³ of soil will need to be removed to build up the access track from competent strata. It is envisaged that the majority of this excavated soil will be reused on site as part of landscaping measures, including the formation of perimeter berms and reinstatement works. Any residual surplus soil that cannot be accommodated on site will be

disposed of offsite at an appropriately licensed waste recovery or disposal facility, with the option of an Article 27 by-product declaration to the EPA (under the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011, S.I. No. 126 of 2011) pursued where the material meets the relevant criteria. Similarly, the necessary amounts of fill material which must be to ESB Networks specification will be transported onto site, supplemented by suitable material won from the site excavation. This is expected to be 13,650m³.

1.1.7 Site Restoration and Landscaping

This will involve the reinstatement of all other excavated materials and associated landscaping works. It will include the replacement of topsoil in disturbed ground areas such as access tracks and the removal of the construction compound and other temporary work areas. The proposed landscaping is consistent with that proposed under Clare County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála References P22-591 / ABP-316043-23 and P24-60485 / PL-500253-CE-25.

Within the boundary of the proposed development, the Proposed Ballyglass Solar Array (Phase 2) application includes for the removal of some c. 25 linear meters of existing hedgerow required to facilitate the construction of access track throughout the proposed solar parcels. Notwithstanding the above areas of removal, this will be offset by the planting of new native hedgerow (outside of the SID application boundary) and the bolstering of some c.1,400 linear metres. The removal of hedgerow to facilitate the SID substation is limited to 3 linear metres, where it is proposed to add levelling batter to the access track. Overall, there is an additional c. 175m of proposed bolstered hedgerow, with no further removal or new hedgerow planting required as part of the proposed SID substation development as it is wholly contained within the parcels that form part of the proposed Ballyglass Solar Array.

1.1.8 Other Planned Works

Permitted Phase 1 of Ballyglass Solar Array (Clare County Council Reference P22-591 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference ABP-316043-23)

On 21st November 2023, planning permission was granted by An Coimisiún Pleanála for Phase 1 of Ballyglass Solar Array comprising:

A 10-year planning permission for a solar array at Ballyglass, Coolderry, Dromintobin North, Reanabrone, and Oakfield (townlands), Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare. The development will consist of c.265,000 m² of solar panels on ground mounted frames, 8 no. single storey control cabins with associated electrical transformer units and hardstand areas, 2 no. ring main units, underground cabling within the solar array site and within the L70382 public road to connect solar array field parcels, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks (upgrade of existing and new), upgrades to four existing agricultural field entrances on the R463, L3046 and L70382 and creation of new entrance on L70382, temporary construction compound, landscaping and all associated ancillary apparatus and development works.

Proposed Phase 2 of Ballyglass Solar Array (Clare County Council Reference P24-60485 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference PL-500253-CE-25)

Phase 2 of Ballyglass Solar Array was submitted to Clare County Council on the 4th October 2024, comprising:

A 10-year planning permission for a solar array at Coolderry, Dromintobin North, Dromintobin South, Knockbrack Lower, Knockbrack Upper, Monaskeha, Oakfield and Ruanard (townlands), Ardnacrusha, County Clare. The development will consist of c. 330,000 m² of solar panels on ground mounted

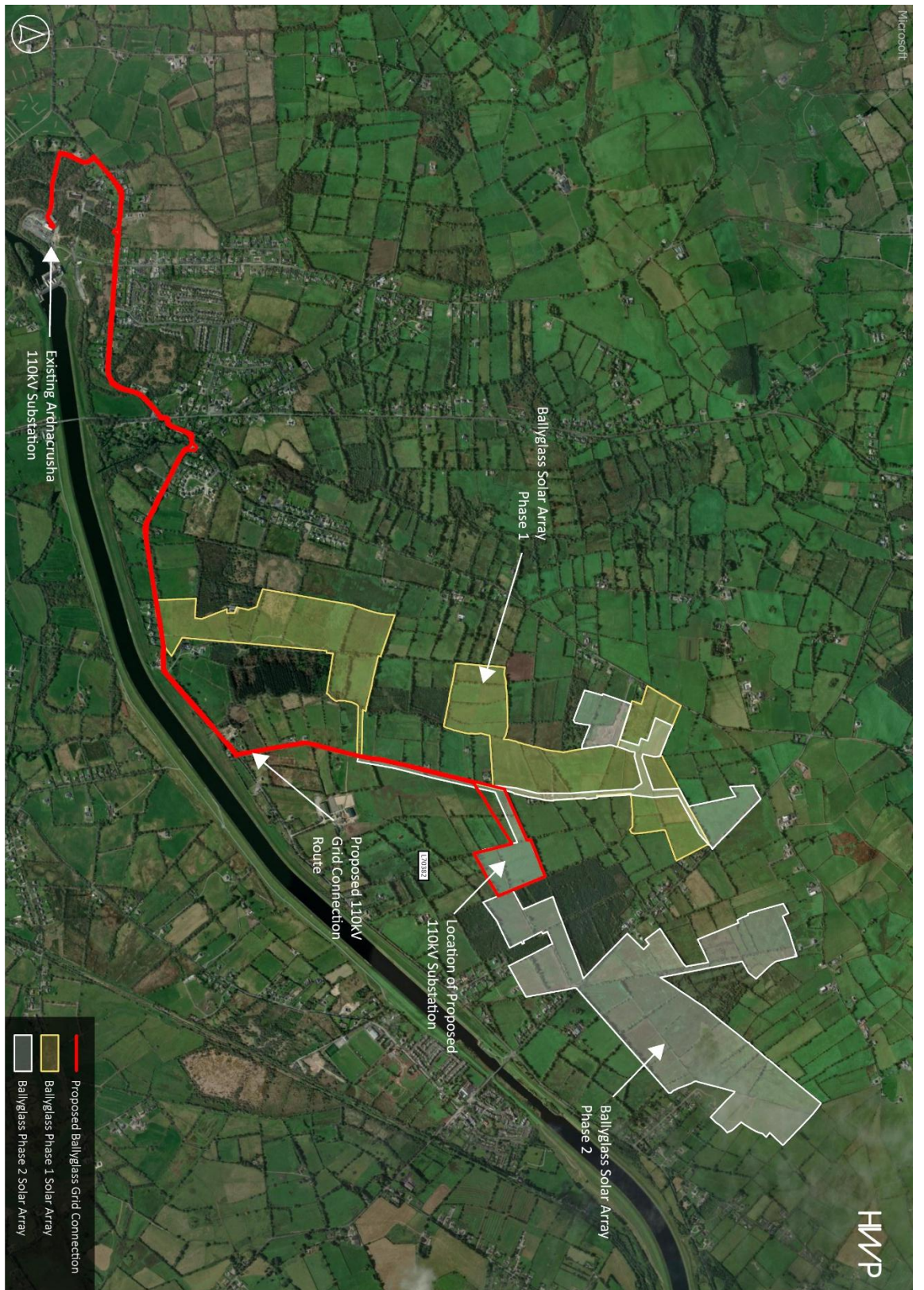
frames, 13 no. single storey control cabins with associated electrical transformer units and hardstand areas, 2 no. ring main units, underground cabling within the solar array site and within the R471 public road to connect solar array field parcels, security fencing, internal CCTV, access tracks (upgrade of existing and new), upgrade to 1 no. existing agricultural field entrance and creation of 2 no. new entrances on the R471 and 1 no. new entrance on the L70382, 2 no. temporary construction compounds (including site offices and welfare facilities), landscaping and all associated ancillary apparatus and development works.

The proposed development provides for minor modifications to the solar array permitted under Clare County Council Reference P22/591 / An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference ABP-316043-23. These modifications comprise the omission of 1 no. single storey control cabin and associated electrical transformer unit, omission of solar panels and access track, and reconfiguration of internal cabling. The solar array will connect to the national grid and will have an operational lifespan of 40 years.

Clare County Council granted conditional permission on the 16th October 2025. First and Third Party appeals were submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála regarding same, An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference PL-500253-CE-25 refers. This case was due to be decided by 17th June 2026

2.2 Description of Location of Site

The subject site of c. 13.5 hectares comprises agricultural lands and sections of the public road network in the townlands of Ballyglass, Blackwater, Castlebank, Lakyle, Mountcatherine, Oakfield, Parkroe, Reanabrone, Rosmadda West and Ruanard, Ardnacrusha, County Clare. The proposed substation is located on a greenfield site in the townlands of Oakfield and Ruanard, with the grid connection route extending c. 5.6 km to the existing Ardnacrusha 110kV substation. The site is located 4.8 kilometres northeast Limerick City Centre. The site and its immediate surroundings are typically flat to low rolling, sloping down from the glacial upland areas to the north towards the River Shannon corridor. The substation site is wholly contained within the parcels that form part of the proposed Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 2.



Site Context

2.3 Environmental Sensitivities

2.3.1 Landscape

Based on a review of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, the subject site is wholly located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 9 'River Shannon Farmland' and Landscape Character Type (LCT) 24 'River Valley Farmland'. The landscape character of the study area is that of a typical productive rural landscape that is not particularly rare or distinctive at a national or regional scale, and designated as a "Working Landscape" area. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment deems the landscape sensitivity of the study area to be Medium-low. There are no designated scenic routes within the study area; the nearest scenic designation is Scenic Route 26 (the R466 between Broadford and O'Briensbridge) to the north of the study area.

The predominant land use in relation to the site is pastoral farmland bound by networks of hedgerow vegetation and mature tree lines. The study area is influenced by a range of anthropogenic land uses and landscape features, including a strong presence of electrical infrastructure with overhead cable corridors and transmission structures traversing the surrounding landscape. Ardnacrusha is home to the Ardnacrusha Hydroelectric Power Station, Ireland's largest river hydroelectric scheme, operational since 1929. Existing electricity cables and pylon structures are characteristic features of this rural landscape.

2.3.2 Amenity

As with any new development, there is potential for effects on the amenity of adjacent residential properties. Landscape and visual and noise matters have each been assessed, and the layout and landscaping approach has been developed in response. The nearest residential property is approximately 200 metres from the proposed substation compound. On that basis the proposal will protect the amenity of existing residents in the area.

2.3.3 Biodiversity & European Sites

The proposed substation site comprises improved agricultural grassland of local ecological importance, wholly contained within the parcels that form part of the proposed Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 2. A terrestrial Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Greenleaf Ecology and an aquatic Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Lauren Williams accompany the application. The underground cable route involves five watercourse crossings. The Blackwater (Clare) River will be crossed by Horizontal Directional Drilling beneath the watercourse, and the Oakfield 25 and West Roo watercourses by flatbed methodologies over or alongside the existing culverts. No instream works are proposed or required, no watercourse will be directly impacted, and all crossings will be carried out in accordance with Inland Fisheries Ireland guidelines.

The terrestrial Ecological Impact Assessment records no Annex I habitat, no rare or protected plant species and no invasive plant species within the substation site or along the grid connection route. Eleven nationally designated sites lie within 10 kilometres and the assessment concludes that no significant effects on nationally designated sites will arise. Hedgerow removal for the proposed development is limited to 3 linear metres and is assessed as having a negligible effect on foraging and commuting bats. The matters requiring mitigation are the potential for disturbance to otter at the Blackwater (Clare) crossing and to badger, addressed by pre-construction survey and, where required, working buffers and a derogation licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. With that mitigation in place, the assessment identifies no significant residual adverse effects on habitats or species.

With construction best practice and mitigation measures implemented and monitored in accordance with the Construction and Environmental Management Plan and the Aquatic Ecological Impact Assessment, the residual construction phase effects on the Knockbrack Drain, Oakfield 25 Stream, Blackwater (Clare) River and West Roo stream will be limited to localised, neutral to temporary not significant effects on downstream aquatic receptors. Residual operational phase effects will be neutral. The proposed development will not cause deterioration of Water Framework Directive (WFD) ecological status and is compliant with WFD objectives.

The proposed development is not located within any European site and requires no resources, such as excavation or abstraction, from one. It does, however, have hydrological connectivity to the Lower River Shannon SAC via the watercourses crossed by the grid connection route. Screening for Appropriate Assessment could not exclude likely significant effects on the SAC arising from a deterioration in water quality, or from ex-situ disturbance to otter during the Blackwater (Clare) crossing works. A Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement was therefore required and accompanies this application.

The Natura Impact Statement identifies best practice construction and operational control measures to prevent the release of pollutants to the receiving environment. Subject to those measures being implemented in full, it objectively concludes that the proposed development, alone or in combination with any other plan or project, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC, and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such adverse effects.

2.3.4 Traffic Impact

It is proposed to access the site via a new entrance from the L70382, as described in the submitted plans. 70 metre sightlines are proposed on the L70382 and are available at the proposed site entrance, which has been subject to swept-path analysis. The substation will be unmanned once operational, with trips confined to maintenance staff accessing the site by light goods vans. These movements will be limited to 2-4 trips per month on average. As such, the operational development will give rise to a decrease in both the volume and scale of vehicles accessing the site comparable to existing agri-generated traffic.

The construction phase has the potential to increase traffic congestion and/or public safety hazard, with the significance of impacts likely to be moderate without appropriate mitigation. The submitted Site Access Report confirms that the total assessment of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) trips for the combined Phase 1, Phase 2 and substation/grid connection construction is 6,567 HGV trips, equivalent to an average of 16.6 HGV trips per day over the c. 18-month construction period. Section 10 of the Site Access Report includes a number of focused mitigation measures to minimise the impact on existing road users arising from the temporary construction phase. These include a temporary manual-controlled stop/go system, advance warning signage, a booking system for site deliveries and a pavement condition survey.

2.3.5 Noise

A project-specific Noise Impact Assessment for the proposed substation and grid connection has been prepared by Wave Dynamics, which also assesses the noise environment cumulatively with the permitted and proposed Ballyglass Solar Array phases. The principal noise generating plant is the 110kV substation transformer which, as illustrated on the site layout plans, is located away from local receptors. The assessment was prepared having regard to EPA guidance note NG4, the relevant standards for industrial and construction noise and vibration, and the Clare County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028. Modelled operational noise levels at all 18 noise sensitive locations

are below the applicable NG4 criteria, including the more onerous 'areas of low background noise' criteria applied to the closest locations.

Construction noise and vibration have been predicted at the nearest noise sensitive locations in accordance with BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014, 'Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites'. The construction phase is temporary, so effects will be short term, and noise will be controlled by means of daytime working hours. The assessment predicts that construction noise and vibration from the substation, grid connection and associated solar array will comply with the best practice standards recognised for projects of this type in Ireland. Operational noise is predicted to comply with the project criteria and not to give rise to a negative noise impact. Cumulative noise, in combination with the Ballyglass Solar Array phases and other nearby proposed developments, is also predicted to comply with the project criteria.

2.3.6 Heritage

A detailed Archaeological Impact Assessment has been prepared by John Cronin and Associates and is enclosed with this application. It is based on desktop research, a geophysical survey by Target Archaeological Geophysics Ltd. covering four of the five substation fields, a walkover of the substation site and an inspection of the grid connection route by drive-through survey and aerial and street-level imagery. No recorded archaeological sites are located within or in close proximity to the proposed development area, and there is no direct or indirect impact on the known archaeological resource. There was no indication from the consulted historic maps, aerial photographs or geophysical survey of previously unrecorded archaeological sites. The grid connection route terminates within the compound of Ardnacrusha Power Station, a Protected Structure, where the works are confined to ground already within the developed footprint of the station.

The report recommends a programme of archaeological test trenching at the proposed substation location in advance of construction, and archaeological monitoring of works in previously undisturbed ground along the grid connection, including the joint bays and the HDD pits at the Blackwater (Clare) River. These works will be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist under licence from the National Monuments Service, and a final archaeological report will be furnished to the National Monuments Service and Clare County Council. This provides for the positive conclusion and resolution of all archaeological considerations in respect of the subject application.

2.3.7 Soil

The national Teagasc Subsoils dataset classifies subsoils based on the Geological Survey of Ireland Quaternary sediment types. The site area comprises sandstone till – Devonian, made ground, estuarine sediments (silts and clays) and alluvium. There are no karst landforms or rock outcrops indicated on the site. Potential impacts on land, soil and geology in the absence of appropriate construction phase measures include the following:

- Soils have the potential to become polluted by spillages during construction.
- Soils have the potential to be compacted by plant and machinery during construction.

No potential impacts on land, soils, geology, surface water or groundwater during the operational phase of the proposed development are envisaged.

As outlined above, surface water drainage proposals for the proposed development have been developed to mimic the natural drainage patterns of the site and thereby be in accordance with the best management practices of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

2.3.8 Cumulative Impacts

This screening assessment has also considered potential cumulative impacts that could arise from the proposed development in combination with other known projects in the area. A desktop review of other local projects in the vicinity was undertaken using the Clare County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála planning enquiry systems.

In addition to the Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 1 (P22-591 / ABP-316043-23) and Phase 2 (P24-60485 / PL-500253-CE-25), the projects considered are set out in Table 1 below. The potential for cumulative and in-combination effects on the designated sites within the zone of influence has been considered in full.

Taking the above into consideration, along with the proposed environmental management and controls integrated into the project design and for other projects in the area, no potentially negative cumulative and in-combination ecological effects have been identified. There is some potential for positive cumulative effects on local biodiversity associated with complementary landscaping commitments included as part of this development and at the adjoining solar farm site.

Ref. No.	Distance from Subject Site	Status	Description
24/60416 & ACP-323147-25 Castlebank Green Energy Limited	0km (GCR)	Granted by ACP (with conditions) 14/01/2026	Development consists of planning permission for a period of 10 years to construct and complete a Solar Energy development with a total site area of 36.70 hectares. The Solar Farm will be operational for 40 years. The proposed grid route will connect the substation at Ardnacrusha Power Station via 38kV underground cable (1.2km in length, 320m of within local road L3056). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was submitted with this application.
24/60411 & ABP-321285-24 Lackareagh wind farm	0km (GCR)	Granted by ACP 14/07/2025	The development will consist of: (i) The construction of 7 no. wind turbines. The proposed Grid Connection Route is to Ardnacrusha Power Station crossing over the Blackwater (Clare) by way of ducting alongside the existing bridge parapet. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was submitted with this application and details of the GCR route installation was included in the assessment.
24/60432 and 20/740 'Errina Locke' Housing Development	0.64km	24/60432 Granted 30/10/2024 20/740 Granted - 19/08/2021	24/60432 involved amendments to Housing layout approved under P20/740 to change house types and numbers with minor revision to road layout at Errina Locke including revised house boundaries & all ancillary site works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was submitted as part of an RFI for the development. The NIS and the accompanying CEMP detail the pollution control measures to be implemented during construction.
23/60249 Drummin Solar Farm	0km (GCR)	Granted - 06/09/2023	Solar farm on a site of 70 hectares on Land to the west/north-west of Ardnacrusha within the townlands of Castlebank, Drummin,

			Glenlon North, Glenlon South and Ballykeelaun Co Clare. The solar farm will be operational for 40 years. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared in respect of the development.
21/796	Adjacent Site	Granted – 26/01/2022	Fill the existing poor quality agricultural land with stone and soil to raise the level of the ground, widen existing agricultural entrance, including all ancillary site works
318505 - Carrownagowan windfarm GCR	0.93km	Granted - 23/01/2025	Proposed construction of a 110kV underground grid connection cable connecting the permitted Carrownagowan windfarm to the existing 110kV substation at Ardnacrusha.
318782 - Oatfield Wind Farm	1.12km	Decision Due - 24/06/2024 (Still with ACP when reviewed in March 2026)	Planning permission to develop a Windfarm and Ancillary Infrastructure within the townlands of Ballycar (North), Belvoir, Cloghera, Cloonsheerea, Cloontra, Cloontra East, Cloontra West, Crag, Derrynaveagh, Derryvinnan, Drumsillagh, Sallybank (Merrit), Droomsillagh or Sallybank (Parker), Gortacullin, Knockbrack Lower, Knockshanvo, Kyle, Mountrice, Oatfield and Snaty, Co.Clare
318943 - Ballycar Wind Farm	4.22km	Decision Due - 25/07/2024 Limited Agenda Oral Hearing 22/01/2026	Proposed 12 turbine windfarm, located on a 140-hectare site located within the townlands of Cappateemore East, Ballycannan West, Ballycannan East, Ballycar South, Ballycar North, and Glennagross
317227 - Fahy Beg Wind Farm	0.94km	Granted - 06/03/2024	Development of a wind farm together with the development of an underground grid connection cable to the national grid. The development will consist of 8 wind turbines, a permanent meteorological mast, an onsite 38kV electrical substation, and all associated

			site works. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were submitted with the application.
320705 - Knockshanvo Wind Farm	0km (GCR)	Decision Due – 14/05/2025 – Still undecided as of March 2026	Proposed development of 9 no. wind turbines, 110kV substation and ancillary development located in the townlands of Snatty, Hurdlestown, Oatfield, Drumsillagh, Sallybank, Gortacullin, Aharinaghbeg, Knockshanvo, Cloontra, Cloghoolia, Ballycullen and others, County Clare.
26/60117	0.12km (GCR)	Further Information Requested 23 rd April 2026.	Application for permission for 24 no. dwellings including a second, onsite wastewater treatment system and surface water attenuation area.

Table 1: Summary of planning applications related to relevant projects in the area

2.1 Description of Aspects of the Environment likely to be affected by the project

The most significant possible negative impacts on the environment, without appropriate mitigation measures in place, are likely to be:

- Construction traffic contributing to traffic congestion and road safety hazards on the local road network.
- Adverse amenity impacts arising from noise and air quality pollution during construction and operational phases.
- Disturbance and habitat loss of fauna, and potential impact on the Lower River Shannon SAC.
- Possible landscape and visual impacts.
- Possible impact on archaeological heritage

These matters have been considered in full as part of the design and assessment of the subject proposal. The following assessments have been prepared, which include detailed proposals for mitigation and monitoring;

- Landscape Plan and landscaping proposals.
- Noise Impact Assessment Report.
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, Natura Impact Statement, and terrestrial and aquatic Ecological Impact Assessments.

- Archaeological Impact Assessment.
- Site Access Report.
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan for the Ballyglass 110kV substation and grid connection.
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

2.2 Expected Residues/Emissions/Production of Waste

It is expected that there will be some normal residues/emissions during the construction stage. Standard dust and noise prevention reduction measures as per the majority of planning applications of all scales will be employed and monitored. As such, pollution and nuisances are not considered likely to have the potential to cause significant impacts on the environment. Construction will be guided by a Construction and Environment Management Plan. There will be some waste produced in the construction of the proposed scheme, but this will be subject to normal controls. This will be disposed of using licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors. The scale of the waste production in conjunction with the use of licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors does not cause concern for likely significant impacts on the environment.

At operational stage, there are no significant mitigations measures or methods proposed other than best practice management of the infrastructure. The only waste to be produced during the operational phase will be wastewater, with a 5m³ foul holding tank emptied periodically by a licensed contractor.

2.3 Use of Natural Resources – Soil/Land/Water/Biodiversity

There will be no significant likely impacts on the environment in relation to natural resources in the area. The main use of natural resources will be land. The substation and grid connection are permanent uses on land, with the solar array infrastructure for the Ballyglass Solar Array a temporary use in the landscape. The scale of natural resources used both in construction and operation is not such that would cause concern in terms of significant likely impacts on the environment.

As outlined in the prepared Natura Impact Statement, there is no likelihood of adverse impacts on the nearest European sites following implementation of proposed mitigation measures.

Assessment of EIA Requirement

3.1 Schedule 5 Criteria

Article 93 and Schedule 5 of The Regulations set out the classes of development for which a planning application must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Part 1 and Part 2 Schedule 5 of The Regulations defines the categories and thresholds of developments requiring EIA.

3.1.1 Schedule 5 'Part 1' Projects

Substations and grid connections are not a project type in Schedule 5 'Part 1'. The most relevant energy related project types are set out below with corresponding commentary:

2(a) A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.

110kV substations or underground cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of a thermal power station or combustion installation. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

(20) Construction of overhead electrical power lines with a voltage of 220 kilovolts or more and a length of more than 15 kilometres.

The proposed development comprises an underground cable grid connection and does not include any overhead electrical power lines. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

There are no other project types identified in Schedule 5 'Part 1' which relate either directly or indirectly to solar farms, 110kV substations or underground electrical cables. It is clear therefore that the development is not a project type with regard to 'Part 1' and does not therefore require a mandatory EIA.

The subject proposal does not come under any of the stipulated categories contained in Part 1.

3.1.2 Schedule 5 'Part 2' Projects

Under Schedule 5 - Part 2 the following project types have been assessed to determine applicability to the proposed development:

3(a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water not included in Part 1 of this Schedule with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.

110kV substations or underground cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of the 3(a).

3(b) Industrial installations for carrying gas, steam and hot water with a potential heat output of 300 megawatts or more, or transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables not included in Part 1 of this Schedule, where the voltage would be 200 kilovolts or more.

110kV substations or underground cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of the 3(b).

3(i) Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than 5 turbines or having a total output greater than 5 megawatts.

110kV substations or underground cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of a wind farm.

10(a) Industrial estate development projects, where the area would exceed 15 hectares.

110kV substations or underground cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of industrial estates.

10(b)(iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

Solar farms or 110kV substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an urban development as per the meaning of 10(b)(iv).

10(b)(dd) All private roads which would exceed 2000 metres in length

The proposed development will include access tracks comprising of permeable hardcore which does not fall within a road definition as per the Roads Acts 1993, as amended.

The proposed development is not a project type related to any of the above identified 'Part 2' projects and there is therefore no legal requirement to undertake a sub-threshold EIA Screening in respect of these. The legislative basis for this is well established in planning legislation and interpretive case law including (in the specific case of solar farm development) Kavanagh V An Bord Pleanála [2020] IEHC 259 and Sweetman V An Bord Pleanála [2020] IEHC 39. It is also a well-established precedent with planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.

3.1.3 Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 383 of 2023)

On the 27th July 2023, The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued circular EUIPR 01/2023 advising of amendment to Part 2 of Schedule 5, to re-insert the project type - Projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings, into the planning code.

Projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings, undertaken as part of a wider proposed development, and not as an agricultural activity that must comply with the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011, where the length of field boundary to be removed is above 4 kilometres, or where re-contouring is above 5 hectares, or where the area of lands to be restructured by removal of field boundaries is above 50 hectares.

The proposed substation and grid connection provides for the removal of c.28 linear metres of hedgerow, with 25 linear metres of this for the entrance and access tracks being previously included in the Ballyglass Phase 2 application.

In considering the subject application in combination with the wider solar farm project (Ballyglass Solar array Phase 1 (319.5 linear metres) and 2(218 linear metres)), it is proposed to remove c. 540.5 metres of hedgerow across the entire solar farm and subject substation / grid connection. This is significantly below the identified 4 kilometre threshold.

It is not proposed to re-contour land as part of the proposed development beyond the localised levelling of the substation compound (excavation area of c. 0.9 ha), which is notably below the identified 5 hectare threshold.

The proposed development does not provide for any removal of field boundaries contributing to restructuring of agricultural land. The submitted plans provide for a minor section of localised hedgerow removal equating to 3 metres to facilitate the access track as opposed to any substantive removal of field boundaries. The pattern and integrity of the existing field network system will be retained as part of the solar array project, which represents a temporary use on these lands.

The above interpretation has been corroborated by means of direct engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine who confirmed their view that small focused sections of hedgerow removal is not tantamount to substantive field boundary removal which would materially change the structure of a large farm holding. This point is reinforced in itself by the presence of the 4 kilometre field boundary threshold, which greatly exceeds the removal proposed as part of the project.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed development does not meet any mandatory threshold for EIA. The recent statutory instrument does mean that due to the removal of hedgerow, the substation is potentially a project type that falls broadly within the scope for sub-threshold EIA Screening. This is completed in Section 4 of this statement.

Schedule 7 Screening

4.1 Schedule 7 Criteria

Schedule 7 of The Regulations details the criteria the planning authority must consider in determining whether a sub-threshold EIA should be undertaken. This schedule is a direct transposition of Annex III of EU Directive 2011/92/EU. EU Directive 2014/52/EU provides a revised Annex III and its transposition into national legislation is mandatory. Accordingly, the following provides a screening statement of the proposed development against the Annex III criteria of 2014/52/EU.

4.2 Construction Phase

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold	Impacts during Construction Phase
1. Characteristics of proposed development The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	
The size of the proposed development	The site area of the substation compound and 'loop-in/out' grid connection is c.13.5 hectares. The permitted and proposed Ballyglass Solar Farm arrays have a site area of c.170.5 ha. The proposed substation and grid connection will be constructed alongside these solar arrays over a period of 9-12 months, within a wider construction period of 18 months. The substation / grid connection construction works themselves will be confined to the development site and will be informed by the prepared Construction Method Statement as well as a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the solar farm projects to mitigate potential impacts. These works will be guided by appropriate construction, environmental and health and safety measures to ensure no impact to existing populations. A total of c. 28 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed to facilitate the substation and grid connection. 25 linear metres of this removal is also contained within the Ballyglass Phase 2 solar array application. No significant impacts likely.

The cumulation with other proposed development	This screening assessment has also considered potential cumulative impacts that could arise from the proposed development and wider solar farm project in combination with other known permitted projects in the area. A desktop review of other local projects in the vicinity was undertaken using Clare County Council's and An Coimisiún Pleanála's planning enquiry systems. There are other permitted projects within 5 km of the subject site and the final contractor developed CEMP will consider these as necessary to manage any interrelated traffic management considerations. The proposed development has also been considered alongside the Ballyglass Solar array Phase 1 and 2. A total of c. 540.5 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed throughout the solar farms and substation site to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. The CEMP has been prepared on an integrated basis to proactively address the potential for cumulative interactions. No significant impacts likely.
The Nature of any demolition works	The proposed development does not include any demolition of buildings or other structures. The proposed development includes underground cabling in the public road which will be subject to road opening licencing and formal consents from Clare County Council. The contractor will submit and have agreed a Construction and Environmental Management Plan providing details of all construction methods. Best practice guidance will be adhered to. Once constructed, the proposed development will form part of the national electricity network and will be a permanent fixture. A Decommissioning and Restoration Plan was prepared for the solar array lands. During any decommissioning phase, the substation and grid connection will remain in situ as an ESB Networks / EirGrid asset. All identified impacts from the decommissioning phase will be less than the construction phase and the final plan will be agreed with Clare County Council ahead of any decommissioning works. No significant impacts likely.
The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity	Energy, including electricity and fuels, will be required during construction phase. Some soil will be stripped for access tracks. Construction will use various raw materials typical of the construction of temporary solar farms which are typically inert in nature.

	With the mitigation set out in the accompanying Ecological Impact Assessments and NIS which are incorporated into the Construction and Environmental Management Plan, residual construction phase effects on water resources will not be significant. The wider project includes hedgerow bolstering, new native planting and other measures in support of biodiversity enhancement. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the construction process. No significant impacts likely.
The production of waste	Waste will be generated during the construction phase and this will be typical of development of this nature. Handling of waste will be in full accordance with statutory legislation and associated guidance. Soil cut for the creation of the substation compound will be reused on site as part of the formation of berms and landscaping. In relation to the wider solar farm, waste produced at decommissioning stage will be less than the construction stage with all components of the development re-used or recycled as much as reasonably practicable. Residual disposal will be to a licenced facility. No significant impacts likely.
Pollution and nuisances	Development of site will increase traffic in the area for the duration of the construction phase only. Temporary noise, dust and vibration impacts, as well as any potential for water pollution, have been addressed in the various technical assessments including the Planning and Environmental Statement, Site Access Report, Natura Impact Statement, Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecological Impact Assessment and Construction and Environmental Management Plan. No significant impacts likely.
The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge	No significant risks on the proposed development site are foreseen, subject to strict compliance with standard environmental controls. The proposed development is not subject to the Seveso Directives or COMAH Regulations. The nature and location of the project means that there is no risk of a major accident or disaster. No significant impacts likely.
The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	Additional noise and dust from temporary construction works may be experienced by residents and other property users in the vicinity. This can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. On completion of works, noise

	and dust levels will return to background levels. The design includes focused water control measures to ensure that run-off of sediment or other pollutants will not enter any watercourse, therefore the proposed project will not have any impact on water quality. No significant impacts likely.
2. Location of proposed development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:	
The existing land use	The substation site is currently in agricultural use, as are the wider solar farm lands, and collectively they represent an agricultural diversification project consistent with this land use. The development of the proposed 110kV substation and grid connection is necessary to facilitate this. During the construction phase there will be short-term disruption to the existing land use for both the substation and the solar array components. The solar farm grassed fields will be reseeded post the construction phase. No significant impacts likely.
The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	Based on the completed ecological assessments, the wider project site is currently considered to be of 'local importance', with the majority of the site comprising agricultural grassland. The collective solar farm project includes focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site, including significant hedgerow bolstering and new planting. The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of designated Natura 2000 sites. This report has actively considered the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, and concludes that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. No significant impacts likely.
The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas: • wetlands, • coastal zones, • mountain and forest areas, • nature reserves and parks,	Subject to the mitigation identified in the accompanying reports, the construction phase will not give rise to significant effects on any of the following; ▪ wetlands, ▪ coastal zones, ▪ mountain and forest areas, ▪ nature reserves and parks,

- areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,
- areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,
- densely populated areas,
- landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance

- areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,
- areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,
- densely populated areas,
- landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

The site is not located within any European site. There is, however, hydrological connectivity to the Lower River Shannon SAC via the Oakfield 25, Blackwater (Clare) and West Roo watercourses, and appropriate buffers and drainage controls have been incorporated into the design to protect those watercourses.

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared to actively consider the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites in proximity, arising from the construction phase. No operational impacts have been identified. The findings of the report have determined that subject to identified mitigation measures no significant adverse impacts arising from the construction of the proposed development will occur in relation to Natura 2000 sites.

The Archaeological Impact Assessment concludes there will be no adverse impact on any heritage assets during construction and operation of the development.

The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts.

Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated.

The site is not located in proximity to densely populated areas. Any interaction with the existing population can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. On completion of works, noise and dust levels will return to background levels.

No significant impacts likely.

3. Types and Characteristics of potential impacts

The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:

The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	There is the potential for a localised impact on traffic volumes and flows along the construction delivery route and in the immediate vicinity of the site. A Site Access Report accompanies this application, and a pre-commencement Construction Traffic Management Plan will be put in place to mitigate negative impacts on local traffic flow. Unmitigated, there is the potential for localised disruption due to noise and dust issues etc, but this will be managed in full accordance with best practice environmental standards. The subject site is in a local rural area where the population is not large but protection of the amenity of local residents has been considered in full as a foremost project matter. The spatial extent of the substation, grid connection and wider solar farm has been assessed from a landscape and visual perspective and will not have any adverse impact on the local environment. No significant impacts likely.
The nature of the impact	Potential for the environment to be impacted negatively during the construction phase by way of traffic disruption, noise and dust issues etc. Any impacts will be localised and temporary in nature and are not deemed to be significant. These will be proactively managed via standard environmental protection measures. No significant impacts likely.
The transboundary nature of the impact	The proposed substation / grid connection and wider solar farm project is contained wholly in the county of Clare. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development. No significant impacts likely.
The intensity and complexity of the impact	The intensity and complexity of the construction phase is in keeping with modern construction projects. Construction of substation and solar farms is not a complex activity in the context of other energy or renewable projects. No significant impacts likely.
The probability of the impact	Some level of construction impacts is highly probable, but these will be mitigated by standard best practice techniques identified in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan for the proposed development. No significant impacts likely.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	The construction phase of the development is expected to commence within approximately 3 years of any grant of permission

	and extend for a duration of 18 months. As set out in the submitted Planning and Environmental Statement, this period could change owing to matters outside the control of the applicant. Any impacts will be short-term and restricted by planning conditions in terms of the hours of operation. No permanent negative impacts are anticipated as a result of the construction phase of the project. No significant impacts likely.
The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment.	The potential for construction impacts with other projects have been considered in full. There are other permitted solar farms in proximity to the site. This will be considered, if necessary, as part of the pre-commencement Construction and Environmental Management Plan and the potential for such unforeseen impacts will be mitigated accordingly as part of focused response measures. No significant impacts likely.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact	There is a strong possibility of reducing potential impacts arising from the construction phase through appropriate project management and the application of identified best practice construction and environmental protection methods. The detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan and associated documents will function as a proactive toolkit to significantly reduce the potential for significant impacts. No significant impacts likely.

4.3 Operational Phase

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold	Impacts during Operational Phase
1. Characteristics of proposed development The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	
The size of the proposed development	The site area of the proposed 110kV substation and grid connection is c. 13.5 ha. The substation has been designed to EirGrid size and specification requirements, and as such, is consistent with other substations in terms of scale. The grid connection is fully undergrounded, with no above-ground manifestation in the completed development. Collectively, the size and design of the project will deliver

	significant positive benefits relative to the 'do-nothing' scenario, providing the grid connection for permitted renewable energy development. Collectively, the size and design of the project will deliver positive benefits relative to the 'do-nothing' scenario providing for renewable energy development in an area where solar arrays have previously been considered to be acceptable. No significant impacts likely.
The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity	The land use in the area of the proposed substation and grid connection will change from agriculture to utility use. This is considered to be a positive evolution of this small land parcel in support of the creation of clean renewable energy. The fields under the solar panels will be reseeded for the operational phase with no impact on land or soil resource. Once operational the proposed development and wider solar farm will be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. A potable water supply is not required; water for occasional hand washing and toilet flushing will be provided by harvested rainwater or a groundwater well. Sanitary facilities will be infrequently used and will discharge to holding tanks. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the operational phase. The proposed development includes focused measures to foster biodiversity development across the subject site including the formation of perimeter berms managed to attract pollinators, invertebrates and bird species, and the bolstering of existing hedgerows as biodiversity corridors providing food sources, nesting sites and allowing connectivity throughout the site for different species, in accordance with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. No significant impacts likely.
The production of waste	During the operational phase wastewater related to the substation will be the only waste produced on site. Welfare facilities will be infrequently used, discharging to holding tanks for offsite removal by a licenced contractor. No significant impacts likely.

Pollution and nuisances	During the operational phase the solar farm will generally be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. Traffic generated on local roads arising from these visits will be minimal and less than current HGV/agri-plant trips generated by agricultural activities on the subject lands. Once operational the substation will emit noise associated with a typical substation of this nature, with the transformer being the main source of noise generation. It has been demonstrated that noise from project inclusive of the substation will be well within allowable limits. The functioning surface water network and sanitary system will be subject to routine monitoring and maintenance. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by Macro Works that accompanies this application concludes that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant residual visual impacts. No significant impacts likely.
The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge	In view of the nature of the operation type no negative impacts are foreseen, subject to strict compliance with standard environmental controls. The proposed development is not subject to the Seveso Directives or COMAH Regulations. The nature and location of the project means that there is no risk of a major accident or disaster. No significant impacts likely.
The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	High voltage equipment will be contained within the substation compound and the design and operation of same is well understood in accordance with ESB Network as well as other international standards. Security fencing will be erected to prohibit unauthorised access and warning notices will be erected to ensure no safety issues should arise. The location of the substation and noise generating plant in a setback position from the public road and local residences means that any audible noise during the operational phase will be well within allowable limits. The solar panels themselves are passive installations with no risk to human health, and the project will be enclosed with security fencing. It is considered that this proposal has the potential to have a long-term beneficial impact on human health as a

	consequence of facilitating renewable energy development and reducing reliance on fossil fuels which are damaging to the environment and human health. No significant impacts likely.
2. Location of proposed development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:	
The existing land use	The wider solar array represents an agricultural diversification project on agricultural land which is compatible with the existing land use. A temporary use in the landscape, the solar array phases will be consolidated within the existing established field network structure on the subject farmlands. This will be retained and further consolidated by a total of c. 359 linear metres of new hedgerow planting to be provided as part of Phase 1 of the solar array project, which includes the bolstering of 12,527 linear metres of hedgerow where necessary. Phase 2 of the solar array will provide for c. 385 linear metres of new hedgerow including the bolstering of c. 17,654 linear metres where necessary. The proposed substation component will result in the permanent loss of agricultural land, however this will be positively offset by the generation of renewable energy and enhanced biodiversity delivered by means of proposed landscaping measures. Sheep grazing can be continued on the solar farmlands. No significant impacts likely.
The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	Based on the completed ecological assessments, the wider project site is currently considered to be of 'local importance' with the majority of the site comprising agricultural grassland. The collective project includes focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site, including the formation of berms which will be seeded and maintained as species diverse meadows, and significant hedgerow bolstering and new planting. The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of designated Natura 2000 sites. This report has actively considered the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, and concludes that the proposed development

	will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. No significant impacts likely.
the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas: • wetlands, • coastal zones, • mountain and forest areas, • nature reserves and parks, • areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, • areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded, • densely populated areas, • landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance	The operation of the substation, grid connection and solar farm will not interfere with or result in impacts to any of the following; ▪ wetlands, ▪ coastal zones, ▪ mountain and forest areas, ▪ nature reserves and parks, ▪ areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, ▪ areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded, ▪ densely populated areas, ▪ landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared to actively consider the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase. The findings of the report have determined that subject to identified mitigation measures no significant adverse impacts arising from the construction of the proposed development will occur in relation to Natura 2000 sites. The proposed development will actually decrease the levels of siltation / run-off from the subject site to watercourses / designated sites when compared with the 'do nothing' scenario. The substation site drains to the Knockbrack Drain catchment, with appropriate drainage controls incorporated into the design to ensure the protection of watercourses. Appropriate buffers have been incorporated into the design of the wider solar farm to ensure the protection of water courses. The Archaeological Impact Assessment concludes there will be no adverse impact on any heritage assets. The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts. Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the operations / maintenance phase, including adherence with any applied

	planning conditions during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated. Any interaction with the existing population has been considered proactively as part of project design, with the substation compound c. 200 metres from the nearest residential property. No significant impacts likely.
3. Characteristics of potential impacts The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:	
The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The site area of the proposed 110kV substation and grid connection is c. 13.5 ha, located in a rural area in Co. Clare. The project will be consolidated within the existing agricultural field network, utilising and bolstering the existing pattern of hedgerow boundaries. The spatial extent of any operational impact will be local and potentially visual in nature. The project will be consolidated within the existing agricultural field network, utilising and bolstering the existing pattern of hedgerow boundaries. The spatial extent of any operational impact will be local and potentially visual in nature. A landscape and visual assessment has been prepared for the proposed development. This has directly influenced the design. The findings confirm that on balance the development will not give rise to any adverse effects from the selected viewpoint locations. A separate noise report has been commissioned for the solar farm project, the findings of which confirm that there will be no significant operational impacts on the population in the local area. No significant impacts likely.
The nature of the impact	Expected benefits to physical, micro and macro environments fostering the envisaged growth of renewable energy production and security of supply in Clare and the wider region. The effects will be positive in nature.

	No significant impacts likely.
The transboundary nature of the impact	The proposed substation / grid connection development and wider solar farm project is contained wholly in the county of Clare. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development. No significant impacts likely.
The intensity and complexity of the impact	A temporary use in the landscape, the proposed development, by its nature will be of low intensity and complexity and the impact of the development will be moderate and will be actively managed. No significant impacts likely.
The probability of the impact	The operational phase will change the local environment to some degree. Focused measures are in place to avoid, reduce, or mitigate any likely negative impacts. No significant impacts likely.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	Once constructed, the proposed substation/grid connection will be permanent and non-reversible. The solar panel component of the project represents a temporary use in the landscape which is fully reversible. No significant impacts likely.
Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects.	The potential for operational impacts arising from proposed substation and grid connection, including the permitted Phase 1 and proposed Phase 2, with other permitted local projects has been considered in full. It has been demonstrated that no cumulative impacts will arise as part of the operational development. Cumulatively, the proposed substation and grid connection and Phases 1 and 2 of the solar array will deliver a net positive biodiversity outcome. Phase 1 provides c. 359 linear metres of new hedgerow planting and the bolstering of 12,527 linear metres of existing hedgerow. Phase 2 provides for c. 385 linear metres of new hedgerow and the bolstering of c. 17,654 linear metres. This outweighs the c. 28 linear metres of hedgerow removal required for the substation and grid connection, of which 25 linear metres is already proposed under Phase 2. The bolstered and newly planted hedgerows will function as biodiversity corridors, providing food sources and

	nesting sites and allowing species connectivity across the site. Perimeter berms will be seeded and managed as species-diverse meadows to attract pollinators, invertebrates and bird species, in accordance with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Land under the solar arrays will be reseeded and grazed, replacing intensively managed agricultural grassland of local ecological importance with a more diverse and stable habitat mosaic. The proposed development therefore secures a long-term biodiversity gain alongside renewable energy generation. No significant impacts likely.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact	The proposed substation / grid connection is being shaped by a number of proactive design measures to reduce the potential for any negative impacts. There is a strong possibility of reducing such potential impacts as it relates to the operational development. It has been objectively concluded that the proposed substation and wider solar array project will provide for long-term beneficial impacts of varying degrees, which includes renewable energy development and biodiversity gain. The collective project will support the decarbonisation of fossil fuel electricity generation in Ireland. This is a positive environmental and health impact in terms of the removal of mass emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxides and dust from the atmosphere. No significant impacts likely.

4.4 Decommissioning Phase

As referenced in a number of sections above, this screening statement has also actively considered the decommissioning phase of the solar farm component of the wider project. The solar farm is considered to be temporary in nature, with an operational lifetime for the permitted Phase 1 being 35 years, and 40 years for the proposed Phase 2. In the event that the solar arrays are decommissioned at the end of this period, it is envisaged that the substation may remain in situ as valuable functioning infrastructure on the national electricity transmission network subject to appropriate land agreements. As such, and in the event of a grant of planning permission, it is requested that the operational life of the substation not be time limited by means of an imposed planning condition.

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of The Regulations defines the categories and thresholds of development that require EIA. The proposed 110kV substation and grid connection, as well as the Ballyglass Solar Array phases, are not of a type identified in Part 1 of Schedule 5, nor do they meet any prescribed thresholds for mandatory EIA under Part 2. The statutory instrument S.I. 383 of 2023 does mean that the project is potentially a project type that falls within scope for sub-threshold EIA Screening.

Based on the information provided in accordance with Annex IIA and Annex III of the 2014 Directive, it is considered that a sub-threshold EIA is not required for the proposed development, as adequate measures are in place to avoid, reduce or mitigate likely impacts, such that neither the construction nor operational, nor decommissioning phases of the overall development will have a significant negative impact on the environment. The application is accompanied by focused technical reports across various disciplines which confirm no significant environmental impacts, findings which are reflected in this EIA Screening.



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Accreditations
ISO 9001:2015
ISO 14001:2015
ISO 45001:2018