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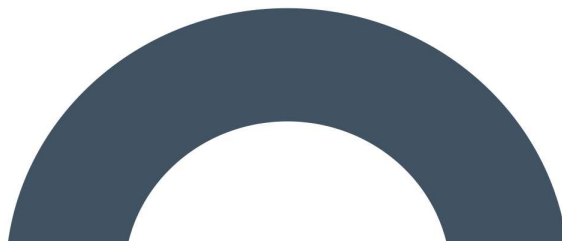
The Hodson Bay Waterfront Park Project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the EU Just Transition Fund

# Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Hodson Bay Waterfront  
Park, Co. Roscommon

Volume 1

Non-Technical Summary





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# NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

## Introduction

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared by MKO on behalf of Roscommon County Council (RCC) in partnership with Waterways Ireland, who intend to apply to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) for permission to redevelop the Hodson Bay waterfront and marina ("Proposed Development") at Barrymore, Co. Roscommon. The Proposed Development aims to enhance the visitor experience along the Lough Ree shoreline and provide improved public access to the River Shannon at Hodson Bay.

The Proposed Development includes the construction of a new Water Sports Pavilion, the redevelopment of the Waterways Ireland-operated marina (including an upgraded breakwater and jetty to increase capacity to approximately 59 berths), public realm upgrades including a landscaped plaza, playground, nature observation space, picnic areas and wellness meadow, a continuous lakeshore promenade, active travel improvements along the L2020 Local Road, and the relocation and expansion of parking areas.

MKO is the environmental consultant for the project and has been commissioned to prepare this EIAR together with a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), both of which accompany the planning application to ACP.

## Applicant

RCC is the lead applicant, progressing the Proposed Development in partnership with Waterways Ireland. RCC manages several tourism and recreational attractions in County Roscommon and intends to strengthen Hodson Bay's significance as a tourism destination, providing high-quality recreational facilities and improving physical and visual connectivity with the River Shannon and Lough Ree. Waterways Ireland is the cross-border navigation authority responsible for over 1,000 kilometres (km) of inland waterways, including the Shannon Navigation on which Hodson Bay marina sits.

## Brief Description of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development consists of the following principal elements:

- Demolition of the existing RCC-owned water sports building and public toilet block, and construction of a new Water Sports Pavilion comprising three buildings and a plaza canopy structure;
- Redevelopment of the existing marina, including an extension to the breakwater and jetty to increase capacity to approximately 59 berths;
- Construction of new landscaped public recreation areas, including a playground, nature observation space, picnic areas, benches, cycle storage, native tree planting and a wellness meadow, together with a continuous lakeshore promenade;
- Active travel and access improvements, including traffic calming and a 3 m wide shared cycle/pedestrian path along the L2020 Local Road, two bus set-down locations and upgraded signage, lighting and road markings;
- Extension of parking provision by 156 additional car parking spaces, 30 electric vehicle (EV) spaces, 28 accessible spaces, 3 dedicated bus bays and 3 boat trailer bays; and
- Ancillary works including site drainage upgrades, utility connections and upgrades to the Athlone Golf Club boundary safety netting (3–20 m in height) and fencing.

## Need for the Proposed Development

The existing marina and water sports facilities at Hodson Bay face capacity constraints, and the current facilities are not of the standard expected at a modern water sports and tourism destination. The Proposed Development will address these constraints, provide a redeveloped water sports/activity centre,

improve opportunities for active recreation in nature and improve connectivity with the River Shannon and Lough Ree. The waterfront at Hodson Bay makes a significant contribution to the economic development of Roscommon, and the Proposed Development is intended as a flagship tourism facility with the potential to attract additional visitors to the area.

## Purpose and Structure of this EIAR

The purpose of this EIAR is to document the current state of the environment in the vicinity of the Proposed Development and to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment. Each chapter has been prepared by a competent expert in the relevant subject matter. The EIAR comprises the following chapters:

1. *Introduction*
2. *Background to the Proposed Development*
3. *Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives*
4. *Description of the Proposed Development*
5. *Population and Human Health*
6. *Biodiversity*
7. *Land, Soils and Geology*
8. *Hydrology and Hydrogeology*
9. *Air Quality*
10. *Climate*
11. *Noise and Vibration*
12. *Cultural Heritage*
13. *Landscape and Visual*
14. *Material Assets*
15. *Vulnerability to Major Accidents and Natural Disasters*
16. *Interactions of the Foregoing*
17. *Schedule of Commitments*

An NIS has also been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and accompanies the planning application.

## Background to the Proposed Development

Chapter 2 of the EIAR sets out the background to the Proposed Development, including site context, planning policy, planning history, scoping and consultation, and the cumulative impact assessment methodology.

The Proposed Development site is situated at Hodson Bay in the townland of Barrymore, Co. Roscommon, approximately 4 km north of Athlone, and extends over an area of approximately 9 hectares (ha). The area is an established tourism and recreational destination and lies within an area of high environmental sensitivity, being adjacent to and partially within Lough Ree, which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA).

RCC and Waterways Ireland have received funding from Fáilte Ireland under the European Union (EU) Just Transition Fund to advance the project to design, environmental evaluation and statutory consent stages. The Proposed Development has been assessed against European, national, regional and local planning policy, including the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region, regional tourism strategies, and the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022–2028 (including the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan), and is considered to be consistent with the policy framework promoting sustainable tourism development in the area.

Scoping and public consultation was undertaken as part of the preparation of this EIAR, including engagement with statutory bodies and the local community, and is detailed in Chapter 2 Background to the Proposed Development of the EIAR. The Proposed Development has also been considered cumulatively and in combination with relevant approved, existing, and planned projects in the vicinity of the site. Geographical boundaries within which there may be potential for cumulative impacts to arise,

relative to each individual EIAR topic (i.e. each chapter) is set out within the Background to the Proposed Development Chapter. A list of the cumulative projects considered by each of the different disciplines in their cumulative impact assessment are included in Appendix 2-5 of the EIAR.

## Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives

Chapter 3 of the EIAR sets out the reasonable alternatives considered in developing the design of the Proposed Development, in line with the requirements of the EIA Directive.

If the Proposed Development were not to proceed (the "Do-Nothing" alternative), the site would continue in its current use, but the opportunity to address existing capacity constraints, improve safety and accessibility, and deliver the socio-economic and tourism benefits of redevelopment would be lost.

A range of alternative locations, designs and layouts were considered for the key elements of the Proposed Development, including the Water Sports Pavilion, the marina extension, the public realm upgrades and the active travel/parking improvements. These alternatives were assessed against an environmental constraints-led approach and a set of key design objectives. The following are the key objectives of RCC which have informed the design of the Proposed Development and the consideration of design alternatives.

- Creating a visitor experience at Hodson Bay: address capacity constraints at the existing marina, improve the visitor experience and dwell time through the provision of the high-quality facilities proposed.
- Providing a redeveloped water sports/activity centre and additional facilities to provide a unique immersive play experience at Hodson Bay.
- Enhancing opportunities to be active in nature and improve both physical and visual connectivity with the River Shannon and Lough Ree.
- Creating a better interface with the Hodson Bay waterfront and improvement of the quality of the buildings and public space.

As well as the above objectives, RCC and the design team also considered the following key design criteria including

- Sustainability and minimising potential for environmental effects,
- Visitor safety and accessibility,
- Cost, and
- Minimising disturbance to existing businesses and residents in the area.

The project design team considered an alternative layout and location for the Proposed Development which would see the Water Sports Pavilion relocated to the northern area of the site. For a number of reasons set out in Chapter 3, the chosen layout option and location was considered to have a lower potential for significant environmental effects than the alternative proposal of relocating the Water Sports Pavilion to the north of the site. Constructing in the north of the site would have led to a larger construction site footprint and an increased likelihood of negative effects on biodiversity, hydrology, air quality and noise in particular.

A key alternative mitigation example in Chapter 3 is the design of the temporary cofferdam required to facilitate construction works for the Water Sports Pavilion adjacent to Lough Ree. Three cofferdam design options were evaluated, and a combination of sheet piling and an earth bund was selected as the preferred design, as it avoids works within the root protection zone of adjacent alluvial woodland habitat while providing flood protection to a minimum level of 37.5 metres above ordnance datum (mAOD) during construction.

Taking account of the project objectives and the environmental assessments presented throughout this EIAR, RCC and the design team consider the final design of the Proposed Development, as described in Chapter 4, to represent the most suitable option for the redevelopment of the Hodson Bay waterfront and marina.

## Description of the Proposed Development

This chapter of the EIAR describes the Proposed Development and its component parts. This chapter also describes the key features of the environmental controls that will be used within the development during the construction phase and the management of site operations. This description sets the basis against which the EIAR has been carried out.

### Construction Phase

The construction phase is expected to take approximately 30 months subject to securing of funding and will be carried out on a phased basis, with in-water construction elements of the marina and breakwater extension (including piling) undertaken between the months of August to September. In the interest of minimising disturbance to breeding birds, construction will not commence during the bird breeding season which runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> of March to the 31<sup>st</sup> of August inclusive.

The proposed construction working hours are as follows:

- 07:00 – 19:00 Monday to Friday
- 08:00 to 17:00 on Saturday.
- Closed Sundays or Public Holidays.

Chapter 4 of the EIAR sets out the methodologies for how all elements of the Proposed Development will be constructed. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been prepared to manage environmental risks during construction, including water quality protection (via a temporary cofferdam), dust and noise control, and traffic management. See Appendix 4-2 for further details.

All deliveries and vehicles into site will access the site from the L2020 Local Road. The location of the construction entrance and access will be regularly reviewed during the construction to ensure that the pedestrian and vehicular access points are located and maintained appropriately.

A “Just in Time” approach will be implemented for the delivery of particular building materials such as concrete formwork and large structural steels. The locations for the storage of materials will be within the site boundary, primarily within the primary construction compound. Any materials with high potential to cause contamination will be stored in the primary construction compound to minimise potential for runoff or pollution to Lough Ree. It is proposed to provide on-site car parking spaces within the site boundary for workers during the construction phase.

During the construction phase of the Proposed Development, a temporary water sports facility will be provided within the development site to ensure continuity of water sports activities and services throughout the construction works. The space available for the temporary water sports facilities covers an area of 3,510m<sup>2</sup> and a minimum buffer of 10m will be retained between temporary structures and both the lake shore and nearby alluvial woodland habitat to ensure there are no adverse effects on Lough Ree SAC/SPA during this time.

The temporary site will comprise the following elements:

- Marquees to provide temporary indoor space for equipment storage, changing facilities, and operational use;
- Perimeter fencing to secure the temporary compound and separate it from the active construction area;
- Access points to facilitate safe pedestrian and operational access to and from the temporary facility;
- A water access route to maintain safe and functional access to the water for water sports activities and craft launching during the construction period;
- A relocated footway, temporarily repositioned to maintain safe pedestrian connectivity and permeability around the site during construction, in place of the existing route which will be affected by the works.

## Operational Phase

It is proposed that RCC will lease the Water Sports Pavilion building to an appointed operator. The appointed operator will be responsible for the day-to-day operation, management and maintenance of the building and associated facilities.

It is proposed that RCC will also lease the café building to an appointed operator. The appointed operator will be responsible for the day-to-day operation, management and maintenance of the café building and associated facilities.

Operation and maintenance of the marina at Hodson Bay will continue to be the responsibility of Waterways Ireland. Waterways Ireland will ensure provision of all facilities for marina users including the cleaning of bathrooms and shower facilities in the marina services block building. Waterways Ireland will also ensure the functioning and adequate capacity of services provided for boat users of the marina including water, electricity and waste pump-out facilities.

RCC (or an RCC-appointed operator) will be responsible for the maintenance of the Public Recreation Areas at Hodson Bay. This will include regular maintenance of landscaping and meadow areas and maintenance and upkeep of the playground area and public realm facilities including benches. RCC will be responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features throughout the Proposed Development site.

RCC (or an RCC-appointed operator) will be responsible for the maintenance of car and bicycle parking spaces, and road maintenance including the cycle/pedestrian pathway.

Appendix 4-3 of this EIAR sets out the description and frequency of maintenance tasks required for the various elements of the Proposed Development.

## Population and Human Health

One of the principal concerns in the development process is that people, as individuals or communities, should experience no diminution in their quality of life from the direct, indirect or cumulative effects arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of a development. Ultimately, all the effects of a development impinge on human beings, directly and indirectly, positively, and negatively. Chapter 5 of the EIAR assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on population, employment, land use, tourism and human health. The Study Area population was 1,716 persons at the 2022 Census, having grown by 5.3% since 2016, broadly in line with county and national trends.

During construction, up to approximately 25 jobs will be supported, with a short-term slight positive economic effect. Chapter 5 contains details of all mitigation measures set out to minimise potential for population and human health effects during the construction phase including health and safety measures, air quality and dust reduction, water quality protection, traffic and transport measures and noise and vibration measures. Construction will result in a temporary, short-term moderate negative effect on land use and tourism/amenity (including the temporary closure of the marina for up to 6 months and relocation of Baysports water sports activities), reducing to a slight-to-moderate negative residual effect following mitigation, including phased construction works, a temporary alternative Baysports location, and additional parking coming online during construction. No significant effects are predicted.

During operation, the Proposed Development is expected to support approximately 82 jobs and generate an estimated €4.07 million in additional annual spend in the local economy, a long-term significant positive effect. Visitor numbers are projected to increase from approximately 80,000 to 168,000 per year.

The Proposed Development is expected to generate positive effects on population and human health through improved access to outdoor recreation, increased opportunities for physical activity, and enhanced social and wellbeing benefits associated with engagement in nature-based activities. In addition, the project will contribute positively to the local and regional economy by increasing tourism-related expenditure, supporting employment, and strengthening the wider Lough Ree tourism cluster. Operational effects on land use, tourism and wellbeing are assessed as long-term, moderate positive effects.

The Proposed Development will result in a permanent, moderate negative effect on Athlone Golf Club from minor land-take. RCC is committed to working through the impacts with the Athlone Golf Club to minimise the impact, and has included extensive lengths of improved boundary treatments (ball-stop netting) within this planning application where the Proposed Development interacts most closely with the golf course. No significant effects on population or human health are predicted overall, and a moderate positive cumulative effect is anticipated during operation.

Chapter 5 presents an assessment of the cumulative effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development in combination with relevant approved, existing, and planned projects on population and human health. The potential for large scale noise and dust emissions, traffic disturbance, impacts to water quality and impacts on tourism from one off housing developments is considered extremely unlikely. As such, the potential for any of the aforementioned impacts to exceed the associated development boundaries of the projects listed in Appendix 2-1 is considered unlikely. As such, potential for cumulative effects between developments listed in Appendix 2-1 and the Proposed Development on Population and Human Health is considered unlikely, imperceptible and negative for both the construction and operational phases.

## Biodiversity

This chapter assesses the likely significant effects (both alone and cumulatively with other projects) that the Proposed Development may have on Biodiversity, and sets out the mitigation measures proposed to avoid, reduce or offset any potential significant effects that are identified.

To inform the assessment, a comprehensive desk study and suite of field surveys have been carried out. The field surveys included the following.

- Initial Site Walkover
- Dedicated Mammal Survey (including dedicated Otter Survey)
- Breeding Bird Surveys
- Bat roost suitability assessments
- Bat Dusk Emergence Surveys
- Bat Dusk Walkover Surveys
- Static Bat Detector Surveys
- Multi-disciplinary walkover (incl. habitats)
- Detailed Botanical Surveys
  - Narrow-leaved Helleborine surveys
  - Alluvial woodland Annex I habitat assessment
- Aquatic macrophyte surveys
- Wintering Bird Surveys
- eDNA Amphibian Survey
- PRF Tree Inspection Surveys

The site is partially located within, and adjacent to, four European designated sites: Lough Ree SAC and SPA, and (hydrologically upstream of) River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA, as well as the Lough Ree and River Shannon Callows pNHAs. A total of 13 habitats were recorded within the Proposed Development Site including the following:

- Eutrophic lakes
- Exposed sand, gravel, or till
- Reed and large sedge swamps
- Drainage Ditches (In the form of gullies adjacent to the Proposed Development)
- Amenity grassland
- Scattered trees and parkland
- Treelines
- Wet willow-alder-ash woodland
- Scrub
- Recolonising bare ground
- Buildings and artificial surfaces
- Spoil and bare ground

## ➤ Hedgerow

Key ecological receptors identified include the Eutrophic Lake and Reed and Large Sedge Swamp habitats of Lough Ree, Wet Willow-Alder-Ash Woodland (an Annex I habitat), treelines, otter, wintering and breeding birds (including Special Conservation Interest species of nearby SPAs), and a small soprano pipistrelle bat roost (6 bats) within the existing Baysports building, which is to be removed.

Construction-phase risks include potential water quality deterioration affecting aquatic and aquatically dependent habitats, disturbance to alluvial woodland and treeline habitats (239 trees to be removed, including Leyland cypress and cedar treelines), and effects on bats, otter and birds. Key mitigation measures will include a construction-phase cofferdam and 50m lake setback from construction works where possible, avoidance of construction in sensitive alluvial woodland and reedbed lake fringe habitat, replacement of the bat roost located in the existing water sports building for demolition and best-practice construction biosecurity measures against invasive species.

All vegetation clearance works throughout the Proposed Development site and works in the vicinity of sensitive habitats for breeding waterbirds (i.e. reedbeds) will be conducted outside of the breeding bird season (1st March – 31st August, dates inclusive).

All in-lake works including marina extension construction and erection of the cofferdam adjacent to reedbed habitat will take place outside the breeding season (March – July) and wintering season (October – March) for waterbirds and will therefore be limited to the months August - September of any given year.

Following consideration of the residual effects (post mitigation) it is concluded that the Proposed Development will not result in any significant effects on any of the identified Key Ecological Receptors in the long term. It has been concluded that there will be a temporary residual effect at the local geographic scale in the short to medium term (5-15 years) on trees and treeline habitat. No significant effects on receptors of International, National, County Importance or Local importance (higher value) were identified in the long term.

The potential for effects on the European Designated Sites is fully described in the NIS that accompanies this application. The NIS concludes that in view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, the Proposed Development either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have adverse effects on the European Sites that were assessed as part Appropriate Assessment process. Similarly, with the prescribed mitigations in place, there is no potential for impact on any nationally designated site.

## Land, Soils and Geology

Chapter 7 of the EIAR assesses effects on land, soils, subsoils and bedrock. The site covers an area which comprises sports and leisure facilities in the north and a rural setting with roadside dwellings in the south. The elevation of the site ranges from approximately 34 to 40 mAOD. While generally flat, the local area gently slopes from northwest to southeast.

The site is underlain by sands and gravels which overly limestone bedrock. The depth to bedrock at the site is not known.

The removal of soils and possibly shallow bedrock will be required for the construction of buildings, access infrastructure, parking areas, and drainage systems. The relocation of soils and bedrock is a permanent and direct effect on the geology at the site but is considered a standard process for infrastructure development. Where possible, the majority of excavated material (soils and bedrock) will be used for construction base layers, reinstatement and landscaping works around the site. Measures to prevent land, topsoil and subsoil erosion during excavation will be undertaken.

The spillage/leakage of hydrocarbons, cement-based products, and small volumes of chemicals is a standard risk associated with all construction sites. All potential contamination sources are to be carefully managed at the site during the construction and operational phases of the development. Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure likely significant effects on the receiving environment will not occur.

Potential health effects arise mainly through the potential for soil and ground contamination. This type of development (redevelopment of water sports area, marina, road network) is not a recognized source of pollution and so the potential for effects during the operational phase are negligible. The volumes of hydrocarbons/chemicals used on-site during construction will be small in the context of the scale of the site and will be managed in accordance with best practice mitigation measures. The potential residual effects associated with soil or ground contamination and subsequent health effects are negligible.

The scale of the proposed earthworks at the site is minor in the context of the other projects within the study area. With the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant cumulative effects on the land, soils and geological environment are anticipated during the construction or operation stages of the proposed project in combination with other developments.

No significant impacts on the land, soil and geology of the site will occur due to the proposed redevelopment of the waterfront and marina at Hodson Bay, provided the proposed mitigation measures are implemented

## Hydrology and Hydrogeology

Chapter 8 of the EIAR assesses effects on surface water and groundwater. Rainfall across the site percolates to ground and flows through the subsurface towards Lough Ree. Topography gently slopes from west to east; any overland runoff will generally flow eastward. Most rainfall is collected through the stormwater network, with outfall to Lough Ree.

Flood risk at the site arises from elevated lake levels within Lough Ree during extreme rainfall events. The Proposed Development does not encroach upon functional floodplain storage, does not obstruct flood conveyance and will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

The underlying bedrock aquifer has been classified as regionally important, where groundwater flow is predominantly controlled by fractures. Due to the depth and permeability of soil overlying the bedrock aquifer, groundwater at the site is classed as vulnerable in terms of potential effects from the proposed development. As the construction activities of this development are near surface, effects on groundwater are generally negligible and surface water is generally the main sensitive receptor assessed during impact assessments. Likely significant effects on local groundwater supply wells are not anticipated.

The spillage/leakage of hydrocarbons, cement-based products, and small volumes of chemicals is a standard risk associated with all construction sites. All potential contamination sources are to be carefully managed at the site during the construction and operational phases of the development. Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure likely significant effects on the receiving environment will not occur.

The primary risk to groundwater as a result of construction activities at the site is from spills/leaks. Due to the shallow nature of excavations within the development and the location of the development adjacent to Lough Ree (regional groundwater receptor), existing groundwater drainage pathways beneath the site will not be interrupted during construction or operations

The site is located adjacent to and partially within three ecologically designated sites: Lough Ree SAC, Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree pNHA. In terms of receptors, these designated sites can be considered very sensitive. Comprehensive stormwater mitigation and controls are proposed to ensure protection of all downstream receiving waters during construction and operational phases of the development. Mitigation measures will ensure that runoff from the developed areas of the site will be of a high quality and will therefore not have a significant effect on the quality of downstream surface water bodies.

Runoff control and drainage management are key elements in terms of mitigation against potential effects on surface water bodies during the construction stage. 'Clean water' will be 'kept clean' by avoiding disturbance to natural drainage features, minimising works around artificial drainage features, and diverting clean surface water flow around excavations, construction areas and temporary storage areas. During the construction stage all runoff from works areas (i.e. dirty water) will be attenuated and treated to a high quality prior to being released.

During the operational phase, the potential for sediment-laden runoff is much reduced compared to the construction phase; all permanent drainage controls will be in place, and the disturbance of ground and excavation works will be complete. Any introduced drainage works will mimic the existing hydrological regime as far as reasonably practicable, involving grading of the site, reducing stormwater runoff entering any conventional drainage systems, and attenuating runoff in proposed SuDs features prior to discharge to Lough Ree. Some minor maintenance or reuse works are likely to be required, such as maintenance and reuse of site entrances, internal roads and hardstand areas. These works will be of a very minor scale and will be infrequent.

The potential for residual effects on surface water and groundwater receptors is considered to be slight and not significant, respectively, and so the potential for cumulative effects associated with these receptors is limited.

During the operational phase, the water quality controls at the site will ensure no likely significant cumulative effects will occur. Mandated water quality controls at the other project sites will further reduce the potential for likely, significant cumulative effects.

No significant impacts on the surface water and groundwater environment, or designated sites will occur due to the proposed redevelopment of the waterfront and marina at Hodson Bay, provided the proposed mitigation measures are implemented.

## Air Quality

Chapter 9 of the EIAR assesses effects on local air quality. Baseline air quality in the area is typical of rural midlands Ireland and is not currently a concern relative to national standards.

This chapter identifies, describes and assesses the potential significant direct and indirect effects on air quality arising from the construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development.

The EPA has designated four Air Quality Zones for Ireland:

- Zone A: Dublin City and environs;
- Zone B: Cork City and environs;
- Zone C: 16 urban areas with population greater than 15,000;
- Zone D: Remainder of the country.

These zones were defined to meet the criteria for air quality monitoring, assessment and management described in the CAFE Directive, Framework Directive and Daughter Directives. The site of the Proposed Development lies within Zone C, which represents the above listed cities and large towns in Ireland including Athlone Town which is in close proximity to the Proposed Development; the Proposed Development site itself is situated in a more rural area.

The EPA publishes Air Monitoring Station Reports for monitoring locations in all four Air Quality Zones. The most recent report on air quality in Ireland, 'Air Quality in Ireland 2024' was published by the EPA in September 2025. The EPA reports provide SO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>3</sub> concentrations for areas in Zone C. Values for each of these elements recorded within the Zone C monitoring stations listed in the report, have been averaged to give representative values for Zone C. Similar measurement values for all air quality parameters would be expected for the Proposed Development site as it lies in a rural location, within Zone C.

Construction traffic and plant will give rise to short-term, slight exhaust emissions, reducing to imperceptible with standard vehicle maintenance and management measures. Dust risk from demolition, earthworks and construction activity is assessed as high for dust soiling and for ecological receptors (given proximity to Lough Ree SAC/SPA and sensitive habitats) but low for human health; with standard dust suppression measures (water spraying, wheel washing, covered loads), the residual effect reduces to short-term and slight, which is not significant.

During operation, the modest increase in traffic (approximately 432 additional two-way trips per day) will result in a long-term, imperceptible effect on air quality following mitigation, including enhanced active

travel infrastructure and EV charging provision. No significant effects on air quality or human health are predicted.

Given the low number of high-sensitivity receptors (residential receptors) within the air quality study area (70 no. within 250m with just 17 no. within 20m, together with the implementation of standard construction mitigation measures, the potential for significant negative effects arising from construction-related dust and exhaust emissions are considered unlikely and imperceptible. In addition, the residual effects of the Proposed Development alone are assessed as slight and not significant; therefore, in the absence of significant residual effects and considering the limited potential for spatial and temporal overlap with other developments, cumulative effects are also considered slight and not significant.

During the operational phase, cumulative effects on air quality are considered unlikely due to the absence of any substantial operational emission sources associated with either the Proposed Development or cumulative projects identified in Appendix 2-1. The neighbouring developments predominantly comprise one-off residential dwellings, the Hodson Bay Hotel and utility infrastructure, none of which are expected to generate significant emissions to air during normal operation.

## Climate

Chapter 10 of the EIAR assesses the Proposed Development's contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and its resilience to climate change. Carbon modelling using the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Carbon Tool estimates total losses of approximately 28,932 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per annum, comprising approximately 11,951 tonnes from transport-related elements (chiefly embodied carbon in materials) and 16,981 tonnes from the commercial built environment elements (chiefly embodied carbon and construction/demolition waste). These figures represent approximately 0.03% and 0.34% respectively of the relevant national sectoral carbon budgets for 2026-2030.

Carbon losses will be partly offset through replanting of 240 native trees, solar panel installation on the Water Sports Pavilion and café (estimated at 3.6 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent saved per year), and provision of EV charging infrastructure. The new proposed buildings will be designed to Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standard. The design has also considered the resilience of the Proposed Development to future climate change, including flood risk, over its operational lifetime, and it is not considered that the Proposed Development will be negatively affected by, nor will it negatively affect, climate change to a significant degree. No significant effects on climate are predicted during construction or operation.

## Noise and Vibration

Chapter 11 of the EIAR assesses construction and operational noise and vibration effects, based on a baseline noise survey at five locations around the site, including at the Hodson Bay Hotel.

During construction, predicted noise levels at the hotel and other receptors are assessed as not exceeding relevant construction noise criteria, with a temporary, not significant adverse effect anticipated during localised L2020 road upgrade works. Vibration levels are expected to be imperceptible at all receptors, other than brief, localised effects during vibro-rolling.

During operation, noise from marina boat engines may give rise to a slight, not significant increase at the hotel, while traffic noise increases are assessed as neutral and imperceptible. Apart from potential live and prerecorded amplified music played at events, the Proposed Development will not include any sources or activities likely to give rise to noise levels at residential receptors which exceed the 55 dB daytime, 50 dB evening or 45 dB night-time criteria recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Similarly, the 60 dB night-time noise limit recommended by the WHO is highly unlikely to be exceeded at any receptor.

Live and prerecorded amplified music played at events may result in noise levels of 60 dB at the hotel and 50 dB at Yewpoint receptors. These levels will exceed the daytime 55 dB criterion at the hotel, and the 50 dB criterion if such events occur during the period 1900-2300 h.

When present, such events will give rise to a moderate adverse impact at the hotel and at six Yewpoint receptors to the north. However, these events are expected to occur infrequently, and will be short (several hours at most) when undertaken. On this basis, the overall impact will be slight adverse. A single mitigation measure is proposed here: It is proposed to provide advance notification of such events to the hotel and to receptors at Yewpoint.

Overall, the Proposed Development is assessed as resulting in a neutral, long-term and imperceptible noise and vibration effect, with no adverse effect on human health anticipated relative to WHO guidelines.

## Cultural Heritage

Chapter 12 of the EIAR assesses effects on archaeology and architectural heritage. Eighteen sites of archaeological or cultural heritage interest were identified within the study area, including four recorded monuments (one, a causeway, adjacent to the site), a single Protected Structure located approximately 900m from the site, seven undesignated cultural heritage sites, a townland boundary and an area of archaeological potential within the site. Preceding test excavation and metal-detector and wade surveys within the site did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. Appendix 12-1 contains the Archaeological Testing Report and Appendix 12-2 contains the Underwater Archaeology Impact Assessment.

A potential direct impact on the area of archaeological potential in untested green space areas, and an indirect impact on the setting of the nearby causeway, were identified; the latter is not significant. Mitigation measures include archaeological monitoring of subsurface groundworks in untested areas during construction, with agreed procedures should any archaeological material be encountered. Subject to this mitigation, residual effects on cultural heritage are assessed as not significant.

During the operational phase, indirect effects arise when an archaeological, architectural or cultural heritage feature is not located within the footprint of the Proposed Development, or its associated physical effect zone, and thus is not affected directly. Such an effect could include an effect on setting or effect on the Zone of Archaeological Potential of site whereby the actual site itself is not physically affected.

There are two recorded archaeological monuments which are not redundant records. The causeway (CH003) which leads to Goose Island (CH002) is situated adjacent to the proposed 'Main Nature Pathway and Pockets.' In particular, an area with benches is to be located *c.* 25 m west while the secondary pathway will be *c.* 10m west of the causeway. The area to the west is currently a green space, and its development into the 'Main Nature Pathway and Pockets' will result in a change in setting of the causeway (CH003). In addition, the Proposed Development will cause a rearrangement of the layout of the site which will also contribute to the change in setting of the causeway. This effect is negligible as the change in setting is in line with the existing baseline of the site.

Existing vegetation acts as a natural buffer between the large enclosure (CH004) located *c.* 900 m north of the Proposed Development Site and the Proposed Development site. This combined with the distance means that the Proposed Development will not have any indirect effect on the setting of the enclosure.

The Proposed Development provides an opportunity to incorporate an information board to highlight the archaeological and cultural heritage of Hodson Bay.

## Landscape and Visual

Chapter 13 of the EIAR assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on landscape character and visual amenity, based on desk study, site appraisal and photomontage assessment from eight representative viewpoints.

The construction phase is expected to be carried out across a period of approximately 30 months therefore the related effects will be "Short-Term" (1 to 7 years) in duration as per definitions in the EPA (2022) guidance. The construction phase works will have a direct effect on the landscape where the

landform and landcover of the Proposed Development site is materially altered. During the construction phase, potential landscape and visual effects will occur as the Proposed Development site will temporarily change from a series of existing / operational recreational destination sites into construction sites; then revert back to operational recreational sites. In addition, the construction works will involve a temporary relocation of the operative Baysports water sports facilities to the north of the site to ensure continued use of this amenity during the construction phase.

The relocation will involve the temporary set up of tents and canopies to store equipment, portacabins, portaloos and portashowers. There will be an overhead or underground power connection to an existing substation onsite and water supply will be provided via a connection to a watermain that runs through the L2020 Local Road, as such, a very short trench will be inserted to make this watermain connection. There is potential for this trench to be inserted entirely into the existing road/carpark i.e. no disturbance to the amenity grassland in this area. This will be the only ground works required for the temporary set up. Overall, the temporary relocation of Baysports water sports facilities will involve minimally invasive works and will be set within a relatively screened area from a visual perspective, thus no significant landscape or visual impacts would be expected to occur from this portion of the construction works.

The greatest landscape change relates to the Water Sports Pavilion and marina redevelopment along the shoreline, and to landscaping associated with the public realm upgrades. The proposed marina redevelopment and extension will extend the marina further into the lake and provide additional berthing facilities for boats and other vessels. Shoreline fringing vegetation will be substantially retained as part of the Proposed Development, maintaining the landscape character of the lakeshore, and the removal of some mature trees along the L2020 Local Road (primarily for road widening) is assessed as a neutral change overall.

Visual effects are predicted to range from slight to, at most, moderate, and are generally assessed as positive, given that most long-distance views over Lough Ree are preserved and the redevelopment enhances an already-developed tourism destination. The Proposed Development represents both an improvement and enhancement of the waterfront area of the site, as the promenade and pavilion provide new opportunity for receptors to visit and enjoy the landscape as a recreational destination. No significant landscape or visual effects, including cumulative effects with the nearby Yew Point Eco Cabins development, are predicted due to screening effects of intervening vegetation between the two developments. Moreover, the Proposed Development has placed a focus on improving and enhancing landscape character and the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has determined that the quality of predicted landscape effects is likely to be “neutral” to “positive.”

## Material Assets

Chapter 14 of the EIAR assesses effects on traffic and transport, and on utilities, water supply and waste management.

### Traffic and Transport

The existing road network experiences seasonal pressures from tourism, high parking demand at peak times and occasional congestion at the Hodson Bay level crossing. Construction traffic effects are assessed as negative, slight and short-term following implementation of a Traffic Management Plan which will be prepared ahead of construction.

During operation, the Proposed Development is forecast to generate approximately 432 additional two-way vehicle trips per day (44 during the peak hour) – a modest increase that can be accommodated by the existing network without materially affecting its operation. The Proposed Development delivers a comprehensive package of transport benefits, including an increase in parking from 353 to 504 spaces, dedicated bus and boat-trailer parking, EV charging, a continuous shared cycling/walking route linking the N61 National Road to Hodson Bay, and traffic calming measures. The operational effect on traffic and transport is assessed as positive, significant and permanent, with no significant adverse traffic effects predicted.

The assessment of cumulative effects considers the combined influence of the Proposed Development alongside existing traffic conditions and other foreseeable developments within the surrounding transport

network. The Hodson Bay area experiences seasonal peaks in traffic associated with tourism, leisure and hospitality activities, particularly during weekends and the summer months. The existing road network currently accommodates these fluctuations, although parking surveys demonstrate that parking provision regularly operates at or near capacity during periods of peak demand.

The Proposed Development has been specifically developed to address these existing operational constraints through a combination of increased parking provision, improved internal circulation, enhanced wayfinding, active travel infrastructure, traffic calming and improved facilities for buses. These measures provide additional capacity and improve the efficiency and safety of the transport network.

The cumulative operational assessment considers the permanent traffic generated by the Yew Point visitors combined with the projected visitor growth of the Waterfront Park (i.e. the Proposed Development). Even accounting for the Yew Point development, other permitted projects in the area are predominantly small-scale, residential in nature, and do not represent a significant departure from the established traffic profile of Hodson Bay.

The combined peak-hour traffic remains well within the carrying capacity of the L2020 and the N61/L2020 junction. Consequently, the cumulative impact on the capacity and operation of the N61 junction and the local road network is confirmed as not significant. Overall, the Proposed Development is not expected to result in any significant adverse cumulative traffic or transport effects.

### Utilities, Water, and Other Services

This section of the Material Assets chapter assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on utilities or built services in the area such as electricity supply and transmission, water, wastewater, waste management, gas and underground telecommunications.

Existing electricity, telecommunications, water supply and foul drainage infrastructure serves the Proposed Development site and it is proposed that the redeveloped Water Sports Pavilion and marina will connect to the existing utilities, water supply and wastewater networks.

Prior to the demolition of the existing water sports building and adjacent toilet block, the existing electrical services will need to be isolated and disconnected. Active travel measures proposed along the L2020 will be constructed in the vicinity of and under overhead lines. The Proposed Development will also require connection to the existing electricity network which will likely require the temporary planned disconnection of existing services. The construction of the above could lead to accidental damage of existing electrical infrastructure and disruption to local electricity supply. Following the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 14, no impacts on electricity infrastructure or supply are anticipated. The residual effects on electricity infrastructure and supply are temporary imperceptible neutral effects.

OpenEir telecommunications infrastructure runs through the Proposed Development site. Excavation works or heavy machinery operations near the infrastructure may result in accidental damage or disruption to services, posing a risk of accidental damage. Following the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 14, no impacts on telecommunications infrastructure are anticipated. The residual effects on telecommunications infrastructure and supply are temporary imperceptible neutral effects.

Construction phase activities, including excavation works, demolition activities and the temporary disconnection and reconnection to existing water and wastewater infrastructure, have the potential to inadvertently damage existing watermains, foul sewer infrastructure or associated services. This could result in temporary service interruptions or localised damage to existing utility infrastructure. Following the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 14, no impacts on water and wastewater infrastructure are anticipated. The residual effects on water and wastewater infrastructure are temporary imperceptible neutral effects.

As the Proposed Development includes the redevelopment and upgrading of the existing marina and associated waterfront infrastructure, the existing marina represents a key material asset within the receiving environment. During construction there will be a temporary shutdown of the existing marina

and its operations. Its berthing capacity will be reduced to zero. There will be a significant effect on the marina and its operations during the temporary 6-month construction phase.

The proposed Water Sports Pavilion buildings, marina facilities and EV power stations will require power supply. In addition, the lighting scheme across the Proposed Development site will be upgraded with due consideration of the need to minimise ecological disturbance, while ensuring that the safety of visitors to the Hodson Bay area is not compromised. However, no material change to the existing electrical infrastructure is anticipated. The Proposed Development is likely to have a long-term, imperceptible, negative effect on electrical infrastructure and supply during the operational phase.

Foul water will be collected from the proposed Water Sports Pavilion buildings and Marina facilities and will connect to the existing on-site pumping station operated by Uisce Éireann. The Proposed Development is likely to have a long-term, imperceptible, negative effect on water supply and wastewater infrastructure during the operational phase

The Proposed Development is not expected to generate significant quantities of waste due to its nature and scale during the operational phase. The limited waste type will be general municipal waste, recyclable materials, organic/food waste, sanitary waste from welfare facilities, and foul wastewater from toilets, showers and changing areas. Additional marina-related waste may include domestic-type waste from boat users and foul wastewater collected through any boat pump-out facilities. Overall, waste produced during this phase is considered to be long-term, imperceptible and negative on waste management services.

With the implementation of mitigation measures set out in Chapter 14, no significant effects on utilities, water supply or waste management infrastructure are predicted during operation, subject to standard best-practice management and coordination with utility providers.

The redevelopment of an existing Waterways Ireland-operated marina includes an upgraded breakwater and jetty to increase the marina capacity to approximately 59 berths. The Proposed Development will ultimately replace and enhance the existing facilities, resulting in improved functionality, accessibility, safety and visitor experience. This is a permanent, positive, significant effect on the marina infrastructure, capacity and its operations.

## Vulnerability to Major Accidents and Natural Disasters

Chapter 15 of the EIAR assesses the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to major accidents and natural disasters. Major accidents and natural disasters are events that could affect the Proposed Development and, consequently, have the potential to result in adverse environmental effects. Such events may occur during either the construction or operational phases and may arise from operational failures, external hazards, or natural phenomena. In accordance with the EIA Directive, the assessment considers the potential implications for population and human health, biodiversity, land and soil, water, air, climate, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape. The assessment is based on a review of the relevant legislative and policy context, an appraisal of the baseline environment, and an evaluation of both the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to major accidents and natural disasters and its potential to contribute to such events.

A risk register has been developed which contains all potentially relevant risks identified during the construction phase of the Proposed Development. These include severe weather, flooding, water and road/rail traffic accident, contamination of a watercourse or soil and fires.

The principal natural hazard relevant to the site is flooding from Lough Ree during extreme rainfall events; however, the vulnerability of the Proposed Development itself is low due to embedded flood mitigation measures, including raised finished floor levels (38 mAOD) and freeboard allowances. A Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out on the Proposed Development site and is included as Appendix 8-1 to this EIAR.

A Health and Safety Plan and Emergency Response Plan (within the CEMP) will govern construction activities, addressing risks such as accidental spills and construction site hazards. The risk of a major

accident or natural disaster during construction and operation is assessed as low, and no significant effects, including cumulative effects with other projects in the area, are predicted.

## Interactions of the Foregoing

Chapters 5 to 15 of this EIAR identify the potential significant environmental effects in terms of Population and Human Health, Biodiversity, Land, Soils and Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Air Quality, Climate, Noise and Vibration, Landscape and Visual, Cultural Heritage, Material Assets (Roads and Traffic, Utilities and Waste Management), and Vulnerability to Major Accidents and Natural Disasters as a result of the Proposed Development. Chapter 16 assesses the potential for interaction between these effects, recognising that combined effects may exacerbate, ameliorate, or have a neutral influence on individual assessments.

A matrix is presented in Chapter 16 of the EIAR to identify interactions between the various aspects of the environment already discussed in the EIAR. The matrix highlights the occurrence of potential positive or negative impacts during both the construction/decommissioning and operational phases of the Proposed Development. Where any potential interactive effects have been identified, appropriate mitigation is included in the relevant sections (Chapters 5 to 15) of the EIAR.