AtkinsRéalis

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Volume 2 – Chapter 8 – Agronomy

Uisce Éireann

October 2026
0089328DG0040

BALLINA AND LOUGH TALT WATER SUPPLY UPGRADE

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This document has 37 pages including the cover.

Document history

Document title: Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Volume 2 – Chapter 8 – Agronomy

Document reference: 0089328DG0040

Revision	Purpose description	Originated	Checked	Reviewed	Authorised	Date
1.0	Draft	MM	JG	LH	DE	24/07/2026
2.0	Final	AS	JG	LH/DE	DL	22/10/2026

Client signoff

Client	Uisce Éireann
Project	BALLINA AND LOUGH TALT WATER SUPPLY UPGRADE
Job number	1000089328
Client signature/date	

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
AAU	Agricultural Area Utilised
BPS	Booster Pumping Station
BPT	Break Pressure Tank
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
EU	European Union
FEPU	Farm Enterprise Primary Use
GIS	Geographic Information System
HDPE	High-Density Polyethylene
NPF	National Planning Framework
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
RWPS	Raw Water Pumping Station
TWA	Temporary Working Area
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
WSZ	Water Supply Zone

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Agronomy	The assessment of agricultural land, soils, farm operations and farm enterprise interactions relevant to the Proposed Development.
Construction Phase	The period during which the Proposed Development is built, including temporary working areas, excavation, pipe installation, site compounds and reinstatement.
Embedded mitigation	Mitigation measures incorporated into the design and construction methodology of the Proposed Development from the outset.
Farm enterprise	The overall agricultural business operation, which may include one or more agricultural activities carried out by the farmer or landholder.
Farm Enterprise Primary Use	The main agricultural enterprise identified on a holding, such as drystock, dairy, sheep, equine, grassland or mixed livestock.
Infrastructure site	A permanent site associated with the Proposed Development, including the Booster Pumping Station and Break Pressure Tank.
Land take	Land required for the Proposed Development, either temporarily during construction or permanently for operation.
Operational Phase	The period after construction when the Proposed Development is in use and maintained.
Permanent wayleave	The permanent underground pipeline corridor retained for inspection, maintenance and repair, with restrictions on certain activities such as deep excavation, structures and tree planting.
Planning Application Boundary	The boundary enclosing all land included within the planning application for the Proposed Development.
Proposed Development	Ballina and Lough Talt Water Supply Upgrade.
Reinstatement	The restoration of land, soils, drainage, boundaries and surfaces following construction works.
Sensitivity	The vulnerability of an agricultural receptor or holding to change, based on enterprise type, scale, intensity and site conditions.
Severance	The division or fragmentation of an agricultural parcel or holding caused by the Proposed Development, affecting access or management.
Study area	All agricultural parcels and farm enterprises directly affected by the Proposed Development within the Planning Application Boundary.
Temporary Working Area	The temporary construction corridor required to install the pipeline infrastructure and undertake associated works.

8. Agronomy

8.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) assesses the likely significant effects of the Ballina and Lough Talt Water Supply Upgrade (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) on the agricultural environment. The assessment considers the effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural land parcels directly intersected by the Red Line Boundary, with regard to the implications for the wider agricultural holding and associated farm enterprise. The chapter describes the methodology adopted for the assessment, the existing agricultural baseline, the likely significant effects during the construction and operational phases, the proposed mitigation measures and the likely residual effects following implementation of mitigation.

The assessment has taken account of mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development to avoid or reduce potential environmental effects. These embedded mitigation measures form an integral part of the project design and are assumed to be implemented throughout the assessment. Embedded mitigation relevant to agriculture is described in Section 8.6.1.

The agricultural assessment considers those elements of the Proposed Development with the potential to affect agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises. These elements are summarised in Table 8-1. A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in Chapter 3 – Project Description.

Table 8-1 — Elements of the Proposed Development relevant to the agricultural assessment

Infrastructure	Agricultural Relevance
Raw Water Rising Main	Buried pipeline infrastructure resulting in temporary occupation of agricultural land during construction and reinstatement.
Treated Water Trunk Main	Buried pipeline infrastructure routed principally within public roads with limited sections crossing agricultural land. Temporary construction effects on agricultural land where applicable.
Booster Pumping Station	Permanent land take together with temporary construction effects.
Break Pressure Tank	Permanent land take together with temporary construction effects.
Temporary Construction Working Areas	Temporary occupation of agricultural land required for pipeline infrastructure installation, construction access and associated construction activities.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction and Methodology;
- Chapter 3 – Project Description;
- Chapter 7 – Biodiversity;
- Chapter 9 – Land, Soils and Geology;
- Chapter 10 – Water (Hydrology and Hydrogeology);
- Chapter 11 – Air Quality;
- Chapter 12 – Climate;
- Chapter 13 – Noise & Vibration;
- Chapter 14 – Resource and Waste Management; and
- Chapter 18 – Landscape and Visual.

This chapter is also supported by the following appendices and figures:

- Appendix 8-1 – Agronomy Maps, Volume 3 of this EIAR;
- Appendix 8-2 – Table of Impact Assessment – Pipeline Infrastructure, Volume 3 of this EIAR; and
- Appendix 8-3 – Table of Impact Assessment – Infrastructure Sites, Volume 3 of this EIAR.

Appendix 8-1, Volume 3 of the EIAR provides an overview of the agricultural parcels intersected by the Proposed Development. Each agricultural parcel has been assigned a unique parcel identification number, which corresponds to the detailed agricultural assessments presented in Appendices 8-2 and 8-3.

This assessment has been undertaken and reported by a team of competent experts. Details of the qualifications and experience of the specialists contributing to this chapter are provided in Chapter 1 – Introduction and Methodology.

Given the strategic importance of the Proposed Development for water supply to the Ballina region, Uisce Éireann has no plans to decommission the proposed infrastructure. The infrastructure will be maintained and repaired as required throughout its operational life. Accordingly, decommissioning has not been assessed further within this assessment.

Testing and commissioning have been considered as part of the Construction Phase. No additional agricultural effects are anticipated beyond those identified for construction.

8.2 Legislative, Policy and Guidance Context

There are currently no published Irish or European technical guidance documents that prescribe a standard methodology for the assessment of agricultural or agronomic effects within EIAR.

Accordingly, this assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022), supplemented by professional judgement based on established agronomic practice, field survey, consultation with landowners and experience in the assessment of agricultural effects associated with linear infrastructure projects.

The assessment has also had regard to the relevant legislation, planning policy and technical guidance applicable to the assessment of agricultural effects associated with the Proposed Development. The principal documents that informed the assessment are summarised in Table 8-2.

Table 8-2 — Planning policy, legislation, technical guidance and standards

Document Title	Description / Relevance
Policy	
National Planning Framework (NPF), Revised April 2025	Establishes the national planning framework for sustainable development to 2040. The Proposed Development provides the national planning policy context for the delivery of strategic water services infrastructure and sustainable rural development.
Project Ireland 2040: The National Development Plan 2021-2030	Sets out the Government's strategic investment priorities for national infrastructure, including investment in public water infrastructure. Provides strategic policy context for the Proposed Development.

Document Title	Description / Relevance
Policy	
Food Vision 2030 (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2021)	Provides the national strategy for the sustainable development of Ireland's agri-food sector. Relevant to understanding the importance of protecting agricultural productivity, soil resources and the viability of agricultural enterprises.
Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028	Provides the statutory planning framework for County Mayo, including policies relating to the protection of agricultural land, rural enterprise, rural development and strategic infrastructure.
Sligo County Development Plan 2024–2030	Provides the statutory planning framework for County Sligo, including policies relating to the protection of agricultural land, rural enterprise, rural development and strategic infrastructure.
Legislation	
Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)	Provides the legislative framework governing planning and environmental assessment in Ireland.
Planning and Development Act 2024	Modernises and consolidates Ireland's planning legislation. Relevant provisions have been considered where applicable to the Proposed Development.
Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)	Prescribe the procedural requirements for planning applications and Environmental Impact Assessment.
Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU	Establishes the European legislative framework for Environmental Impact Assessment.
European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018), as amended	Transposes the EIA Directive into Irish planning legislation and establishes the statutory framework for Environmental Impact Assessment.
European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 113 of 2022), as amended	Establishes measures for the protection of water quality from agricultural activities. Relevant to soil management, drainage protection and reinstatement of agricultural land during construction.
Technical Guidance	
Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022)	Primary national guidance used in preparing this agricultural assessment and determining the significance of environmental effects.

Document Title	Description / Relevance
Policy	
Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on Carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018)	Provides guidance on the implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment within the Irish planning system.
Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects – Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (European Commission, 2017)	Provides European Commission guidance on preparing Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and informed the assessment methodology adopted for this chapter.

8.3 Methodology

The agricultural assessment has been undertaken using the methodology described in Sections 8.3.2 to 8.3.6 and in accordance with the principles set out in the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022). The assessment considers the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises during both the construction and operational phases.

8.3.1 Assessment Scale

The assessment has been undertaken principally at the individual agricultural holding level, reflecting the localised nature of the potential agricultural effects associated with the Proposed Development. Where relevant, the assessment also considers the wider implications of the Proposed Development at county and national level.

For the purposes of this chapter:

- National – scale effects are those capable of influencing agricultural production or the agricultural sector at a national scale. Such effects would generally arise through changes in national policy or legislation rather than from an individual infrastructure project.
- County – scale effects are those capable of influencing agricultural activity or agricultural enterprises at a county scale, for example where effects extend beyond individual holdings and have wider implications for the local agricultural economy.
- Individual holding effects comprise the direct and indirect effects experienced by agricultural holdings intersected by the Proposed Development. These include effects on agricultural land, farm management, access, drainage, infrastructure and the operation of the farm enterprise.

The assessment presented in this chapter is undertaken primarily at the individual agricultural holding level. The detailed assessment of each affected holding is presented in Appendices 8-2 and 8-3. Consideration is also given to the cumulative residual effects on agriculture at county and national scale, where relevant.

8.3.1.1 Farm Enterprise Classification

Agricultural holdings were classified according to their dominant Farm Enterprise Primary Use (FEPU) to support the assessment of agricultural effects. Where more than one enterprise operated on a holding, the predominant enterprise was used for classification purposes.

- Drystock: Includes beef, sucklers, and contract rearing;
- Dairy: dairy only;
- Equine: equine only;
- Forestry: forestry only;
- Grassland: Includes grazing, silage, hay and leased grassland;
- Horticulture: horticulture only;
- Mixed Livestock: a combination of sheep, equine and or drystock;
- Sheep: sheep only;
- Tillage: all land tilled or marked for tillage – private, leased, or within mixed use.

Where appropriate, these broad classifications are supplemented by a more detailed description of agricultural land use within the individual agricultural holding assessments presented in Appendices 8-2 and 8-3.

8.3.2 Elements of the Proposed Development Considered in the Assessment

The agricultural assessment considers the elements of the Proposed Development that have the potential to affect agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises during both the construction and operational phases. A detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided in Chapter 3 (Project Description); only those project elements relevant to the agricultural assessment are summarised below.

The assessment considers the following temporary project elements during the Construction Phase:

- Temporary construction working areas associated with installation of the pipeline infrastructure, including temporary land take required to facilitate excavation, pipe installation, material storage and reinstatement. Within agricultural land, the standard construction working width is generally approximately 20 m, although wider working areas may be required at crossings, bends and other site-specific locations.
- Temporary construction compounds, welfare facilities, material storage areas, plant and vehicle parking, and temporary access arrangements required to facilitate construction.

The assessment also considers the following permanent project elements during the Operational Phase:

- Installation of a new rising main between Lisglennon Raw Water Pumping Station (RWPS) and Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (WTP), with the existing rising main retained as a maintenance bypass.
- Installation of a new treated water trunk main extending from Lisglennon WTP to the existing Lough Talt WTP, including replacement sections of trunk main and associated pipeline infrastructure such as scour valves, sluice valves and other network fittings.
- Construction and operation of the Bonniconlon Booster Pumping Station (BPS) and the Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank (BPT), including the permanent land required for these infrastructure sites.

The agricultural assessment considers the potential effects of these project elements on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises, including temporary and permanent land take, disruption to farm access and field

connectivity, disturbance to soils and field drainage, effects on agricultural infrastructure, and the continued operation of affected farm enterprises.

8.3.3 Study Area

The study area for the agricultural assessment comprises the agricultural parcels directly intersected by the Proposed Development within the Planning Application Boundary. These parcels define the spatial extent of the assessment because they represent the locations where direct agricultural effects may occur, including temporary land take, soil disturbance, drainage disruption, access restrictions and permanent land take.

The assessment of effects is undertaken at the agricultural holding and farm enterprise level, recognising that effects occurring on an individual parcel may influence the operation and management of the wider agricultural holding. Agricultural holdings that are not intersected by the Proposed Development are not expected to experience direct agricultural effects. Wider environmental effects capable of extending beyond the Planning Application Boundary, such as construction noise or vibration, are assessed separately within the relevant technical chapters where appropriate.

8.3.3.1 Definition of Agricultural Terms

For clarity and consistency throughout this chapter, the following terminology is applied:

- Farmer/Landholder refers to the landowner, tenant or any other person with responsibility for farming the land.
- Agricultural holding refers to all agricultural land farmed by a single farmer or landholder, irrespective of ownership, tenure or the number of separate land parcels or Land Registry folios involved. An agricultural holding may also include land held under commonage grazing rights where applicable.
- Agricultural parcel refers to a discrete area of agricultural land under management. Within this assessment, agricultural parcels comprise the individual parcels directly intersected by the Proposed Development and define the spatial extent of the agricultural assessment. A parcel may comprise part of, or the entirety of, an agricultural holding.
- Farm enterprise refers to the principal agricultural business undertaken on an agricultural holding and encompasses one or more agricultural enterprises carried out by the farmer or landholder. For the purposes of this chapter, the term ‘farmer’ or ‘landholder’ includes the landowner, tenant, or any other person with responsibility for farming the land.

In Ireland, land ownership is recorded in the Land Registry, where each property is assigned a folio number. While a folio represents the legal record of land ownership, agricultural management does not necessarily correspond with individual folios. Agricultural holdings may comprise multiple folios, leased land or lands held under commonage grazing rights. Accordingly, the relevant units of assessment for this chapter are agricultural parcels, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises, as defined above.

8.3.3.2 Agricultural Parcels in the Study Area

A total of 36 agricultural parcels are directly intersected by the Proposed Development and therefore comprise the agricultural study area. Of these, 34 agricultural parcels are associated with the pipeline infrastructure, and two agricultural parcels are associated with the permanent infrastructure sites comprising the BPT and BPS.

The affected parcels form part of a number of wider agricultural holdings and are associated with 43 registered landowners and commonage shareholders. In several instances, agricultural parcels comprise areas of commonage where multiple shareholders hold legal ownership and grazing rights. Consequently, the number of registered landowners does not necessarily correspond to the number of agricultural holdings or farm enterprises assessed.

The detailed agricultural assessment for parcels affected by the pipeline infrastructure is provided in Appendix 8-2, while the assessment for parcels affected by the infrastructure sites is provided in Appendix 8-3.

8.3.4 Data Collection Methods

The agricultural assessment was informed by a range of published datasets, mapping resources and project-specific information used to establish the baseline agricultural environment, identify agricultural holdings potentially affected by the Proposed Development and support the assessment of agricultural effects.

The principal information sources reviewed as part of the assessment included:

- Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) mapping;
- Recent orthophotography;
- Project Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping;
- Land direct online mapping and folio information;
- Irish Soil Information System (EPA and Teagasc), digital dataset (updated May 2021);
- Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census of Agriculture 2020;
- Central Statistics Office (CSO) Farm Structure Survey 2023;
- Teagasc National Farm Survey 2025;
- Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028; and
- Sligo County Development Plan 2024–2030.

These information sources informed the desktop assessment, field survey programme and subsequent assessment of agricultural effects associated with the Proposed Development.

8.3.5 Survey and Analysis Methods

8.3.5.1 Desktop Study

A desktop study was undertaken using the data sources described in Section 8.3.4 to establish the baseline agricultural environment and identify agricultural holdings and agricultural parcels potentially affected by the Proposed Development.

The desktop assessment involved review of project mapping, aerial photography, Land direct folio information, agricultural statistics and published soil information. This information was used to characterise existing agricultural land use, identify agricultural receptors, support planning of the field survey programme and inform the assessment of potential agricultural effects.

8.3.5.2 Agricultural Field Surveys

Agricultural field surveys were undertaken during January and February 2026 within the Planning Application Boundary of the Proposed Development. Surveys comprised site walkovers, roadside inspections and consultation with affected landowners, where available.

The purpose of the surveys was to establish the baseline agricultural conditions of agricultural holdings directly affected by the Proposed Development and to record information relevant to the assessment of agricultural effects.

Information collected during the surveys included:

- Agricultural land use and farm enterprise type;

- Agricultural land quality and field management practices;
- Livestock presence and grazing management, where applicable;
- Farm access arrangements and field connectivity;
- Agricultural infrastructure, including fencing, water supply infrastructure, field boundaries and field drainage systems; and
- Other site-specific characteristics relevant to the assessment of agricultural effects.

Information obtained during the field surveys was incorporated into the project GIS database and used to refine the baseline agricultural assessment and confirm the characteristics of agricultural receptors used throughout the assessment.

8.3.5.3 Limitations

Agricultural field surveys undertaken by the Agronomist, ideally in consultation with the affected landowner, represented the preferred and most reliable method of assessing the likely agricultural effects of the Proposed Development. Consultation with landowners provided valuable information on farm management practices, agricultural operations and the functional importance of affected parcels. However, it was not possible to obtain access to all agricultural holdings or to undertake surveys in consultation with all landowners.

Where field surveys could not be undertaken, or where consultation with landowners was not possible, the Agronomy Team employed a combination of roadside inspections, aerial imagery, project mapping, existing records and professional judgement to determine farm enterprise type, land quality, drainage characteristics, access arrangements and agricultural infrastructure.

Direct agricultural surveys were completed for approximately 89% of affected agricultural holdings, with the remaining holdings assessed using the combination of roadside inspection and desktop information described above. The limitations associated with roadside surveys, including restricted visibility in some locations, were mitigated where practicable through the use of aerial imagery, GIS mapping and other available information sources. On this basis, sufficient information was available to establish the baseline agricultural environment and undertake a robust assessment of the likely agricultural effects of the Proposed Development.

8.3.6 Appraisal Method

The agricultural assessment considers the potential effects arising from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises. The assessment has been undertaken using information obtained from agricultural surveys, desktop studies, engineering drawings and consultation with landowners, and has been informed by the construction methodology described in Chapter 3 (Project Description).

The assessment follows a source–pathway–receptor approach, whereby the Proposed Development represents the source of potential effects, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises comprise the receptors, and the interaction between the Proposed Development and the agricultural receptor determines the significance of the predicted effect. Professional judgement was applied throughout the assessment, informed by field observations, available agricultural information and consultation with landowners, where available.

The assessment of effects process involved the following steps:

- Evaluation of the baseline agricultural environment, including the identification of agricultural land use and dominant farm enterprise classifications within the affected agricultural parcels.
- Assignment of receptor sensitivity to each agricultural holding, taking account of the farm enterprise, scale of the holding, intensity of agricultural activity and site-specific characteristics.

- Determination of the magnitude and duration of predicted effects, including temporary and permanent land take, disruption to farm access, parcel severance, disturbance to soils and field drainage, and effects on farm infrastructure and agricultural operations.
- Determination of the significance of effects through consideration of the sensitivity of the agricultural receptor together with the predicted magnitude and duration of the effect.

Detailed assessments of individual agricultural parcels affected by the pipeline infrastructure and permanent infrastructure sites are presented in Appendix 8-2 (Pipeline Infrastructure) and Appendix 8-3 (Infrastructure Sites – Break Pressure Tank and Booster Pumping Station).

8.3.6.1 Sensitivity of the Receptor

The sensitivity of each agricultural receptor was determined having regard to the characteristics of the agricultural holding and farm enterprise affected by the Proposed Development. Sensitivity was assigned based on the enterprise type, the scale and intensity of agricultural activity, and site-specific characteristics including agricultural land quality, access arrangements, existing farm infrastructure and the functional importance of the affected agricultural parcel within the wider holding.

Sensitivity was determined using information obtained during agronomy field surveys undertaken in January and February 2026, including landowner consultation, site walkovers and field observations, supplemented where necessary by roadside assessments, aerial imagery, project mapping and professional judgement. Where direct access to agricultural land or consultation with landowners was not possible, receptor sensitivity was assigned using the best available information.

The criteria used to categorise receptor sensitivity are presented in Table 8-3.

Table 8-3 — Criteria for categorisation of sensitivity

Agricultural Enterprise	Enterprise Intensity (based on site evaluation)	Receptor Sensitivity
Stud farm / racing yard / equestrian facility	High	Very high
	Medium	High
	Low	Medium
Dairy enterprise	High	High
	Medium	High
	Low	Medium
Livestock enterprise (beef, sheep, mixed livestock, non-intensive equine)	High	Medium
	Medium	Low
	Low	Very low
Tillage / horticultural enterprise*	High	High

	Medium	Medium
	Low	Low
Rough grazing, commonage, forestry	Medium	Low
	Low	Very Low

*Note**:** Enterprise intensity reflects the relative level of agricultural activity, investment and operational dependence associated with the affected agricultural parcel and wider holding. It was determined through agronomy field survey, landowner consultation (where available) and professional judgement.

8.3.6.2 Assigning the Significance of Effects to Each Agricultural Holding

The significance of predicted agricultural effects was determined using the EPA significance criteria presented in Chapter 1 (Introduction and Methodology) and interpreted for the purposes of the agricultural assessment. The assessment considered the interaction between the sensitivity of the agricultural receptor and the predicted magnitude and duration of the effect, supported by professional judgement informed by agronomy field surveys, landowner consultation and desktop assessment.

In accordance with the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022), effects assessed as Imperceptible, Not Significant or Slight are considered not significant in EIA terms, while Moderate, Significant, Very Significant and Profound effects are considered significant.

Within an agricultural context, effects may arise through temporary or permanent land take, parcel severance, disruption to farm access, disturbance to soils and field drainage, or restrictions on normal agricultural operations. Consequently, the EPA significance criteria have been interpreted to reflect the potential consequences of these effects on the operation and viability of agricultural holdings and farm enterprises. The interpretation adopted for this assessment is presented in Table 8-4.

Table 8-4 — Significance criteria for overall effects on agricultural land holdings

EPA Effects Criteria	Definition of Significance from EPA Guidelines	Interpretation for Agricultural Receptors
Imperceptible (not significant)	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.	No discernible effect on the operation or management of the agricultural holding or farm enterprise. Agricultural activities continue unchanged.
Not Significant (not significant)	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.	Minor temporary disturbance to normal farming activities with no measurable effect on the operation, productivity or viability of the agricultural holding.
Slight (not significant)	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.	Noticeable but readily manageable effects on the agricultural holding, such as temporary access restrictions or minor operational inconvenience, without materially affecting the continued operation of the farm enterprise.
Moderate (significant)	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is	The agricultural holding remains viable but requires changes to normal management practices. Effects may include temporary or permanent land take, parcel

EPA Effects Criteria	Definition of Significance from EPA Guidelines	Interpretation for Agricultural Receptors
	consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.	severance, increased travel distances, adjustments to stocking rates, additional labour requirements or changes to field management practices.
Significant (significant)	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.	The agricultural holding experiences substantial disruption requiring ongoing management intervention or operational changes to maintain the farm enterprise. The effect may include permanent subdivision of the holding, reduced operational efficiency or disruption to farm infrastructure.
Very Significant (significant)	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.	The agricultural holding cannot continue without considerable operational or management changes. The Proposed Development may permanently affect farm infrastructure, significantly alter field access or necessitate changes to the farming system or enterprise type.
Profound (significant)	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.	The Proposed Development results in the loss of the functional viability of the agricultural holding or farm enterprise. This would typically occur where land take or the loss of essential farm infrastructure renders the enterprise no longer capable of operating in its existing form.

Although the EPA definition of a Moderate effect refers to an alteration of the environment that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends, the consequences of land take, parcel severance or disruption to agricultural operations may be proportionately greater at the individual farm holding level. Accordingly, where such effects result in measurable changes to the management or operation of an agricultural holding or farm enterprise, a Moderate effect is considered significant for the purposes of this assessment, consistent with the significance framework presented in Chapter 1 (Introduction and Methodology).

8.3.6.3 Identifying and Categorising the Magnitude of the Effect

The magnitude of the predicted effect was determined by the Agronomy Team following a detailed review of agricultural survey information, landowner consultation, engineering drawings, project mapping and the Proposed Development design. Magnitude reflects the scale, nature, duration and functional importance of the predicted effect on the agricultural holding or farm enterprise and forms one of the principal considerations in determining the significance of effects. A separate magnitude category was not assigned to each agricultural holding; instead, the Agronomy Team considered the indicative criteria presented in Table 8-5, together with the specific characteristics of each agricultural holding, to inform professional judgement when determining the overall significance of effects.

Magnitude was not determined using a single numerical threshold (e.g. percentage land take), as this would not adequately reflect the way agricultural holding's function, instead, the magnitude of effect was informed by consideration of the following factors:

- Sensitivity of the agricultural holding and associated farm enterprise, including the type and intensity of agricultural activity (e.g. drystock, sheep, dairy, equine or mixed livestock).
- Proportion and configuration of agricultural land affected within the agricultural holding, including whether the Proposed Development affects strategically important areas such as fields adjoining the farmyard, frequently used grazing parcels or areas supporting key farm operations.

- Temporary or permanent severance of agricultural parcels and the practicality of maintaining access between fields during construction and operation.
- Potential effects on farm infrastructure, including fencing, livestock drinkers, water supply pipework, field boundaries and other agricultural infrastructure.
- Potential effects on soil resources and existing field drainage systems during construction and reinstatement.
- Operational constraints associated with the permanent pipeline route easement, including restrictions on future land use (e.g. deep excavation, tree planting or construction of permanent structures).

Table 8-5 — Indicative Criteria Informing Professional Judgement of Magnitude of Agricultural Effects

Magnitude	Indicative Assessment Criteria
High	Extensive permanent or temporary land take affecting a substantial proportion of the agricultural holding; significant parcel severance; loss or permanent disruption of essential farm infrastructure; substantial restrictions on farm management; or effects likely to require a change in farming enterprise or fundamentally alter farm operation. This may typically include permanent or temporary land take exceeding approximately 15% of the agricultural holding where no overriding functional considerations apply.
Medium – High	Significant land take or severance requiring considerable operational changes, increased labour requirements or altered farm management. Farm infrastructure may require relocation or replacement. Indicatively, land take may comprise approximately 10–15% of the agricultural holding.
Medium	Moderate land take or temporary disruption requiring changes to farm management practices but without fundamentally altering the farming enterprise. Severance or access disruption can be managed through mitigation or operational adjustments. Indicatively, land take may comprise approximately 5–10% of the agricultural holding.
Low – Medium	Limited land take or temporary disturbance affecting a relatively small proportion of the holding. Minor changes to day-to-day farm management may be required. Indicatively, land take may comprise approximately 2.5–5% of the agricultural holding.
Low	Very limited temporary disturbance or land take with little influence on normal farming activities. Existing management practices can continue with minimal adjustment. Indicatively, land take may comprise less than approximately 2.5% of the agricultural holding.
Negligible	No measurable effect, or effects that are imperceptible in terms of agricultural operation or management.

The criteria presented in Table 8-6 were used to support the consistent application of professional judgement throughout the assessment. The indicative thresholds were not applied as absolute criteria, and no single factor or threshold determined the magnitude of effect. Rather, the Agronomy Team considered the interaction between land take, parcel configuration, enterprise type, access arrangements, farm infrastructure, operational characteristics and the sensitivity of the agricultural holding when determining the overall significance of effects.

8.3.6.4 Duration of Impact

The duration of predicted effects was determined in accordance with the EPA duration criteria presented in Chapter 1 (Introduction and Methodology). Duration formed an important consideration in determining the overall significance of effects on agricultural holdings and farm enterprises.

For the purposes of this assessment, construction effects associated with the installation of the pipeline infrastructure, temporary construction working areas and associated infrastructure were generally considered to be short-term,

reflecting the temporary nature of construction activities and the reinstatement of agricultural land following completion of the works.

Operational effects associated with the permanent infrastructure sites, including the BPT, BPS and the permanent pipeline route easement, were generally considered to be permanent, reflecting the long-term presence of the infrastructure and associated restrictions on future land use.

The EPA duration criteria adopted for the assessment are presented in Table 8-6.

Table 8-6 — Criteria for the Assessment of the Duration of Effects

Criteria	Duration
Momentary	Effects lasting seconds to minutes
Brief	Less than one day
Temporary	Less than one year
Short-term	One to seven years
Medium-term	Seven to 15 years
Long-term	15 to 60 years
Permanent	More than 60 years
Reversible	Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration
Frequency of Effects	The frequency with which an effect occurs (e.g. once, rarely, occasionally, frequently or continuously).

8.3.6.5 Construction Methodology

The agricultural assessment has been undertaken having regard to the construction methodology described in Chapter 3 (Project Description), as the nature and duration of construction activities influence the assessment of potential effects on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises.

8.3.6.6 Difficulties Encountered in Compiling Information

Of the 36 agricultural parcels identified within the study area, 34 parcels are affected by the pipeline infrastructure (Appendix 8-2). Agronomy field surveys or direct landowner engagement were completed for 31 of these parcels, while three parcels were assessed using roadside surveys, aerial imagery, project mapping and professional judgement, was considered sufficient to inform the assessment.

Two agricultural parcels are associated with the infrastructure sites (Appendix 8-3). Direct agronomy surveys were not undertaken for one of these parcels. The second parcel comprises upland commonage land shared by 13 identified shareholders, of whom 11 participated in the agronomy survey. Information obtained through these surveys, together with desktop assessment and professional judgement, was considered sufficient to inform the assessment.

8.3.7 Cumulative Effects Assessment

The assessment of cumulative effects has been undertaken in accordance with the methodology described in Chapter 1 (Introduction, Application and Site Context & EIA Methodology) and the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022). The assessment considers the potential for

the Proposed Development to interact with other existing, permitted, approved or reasonably foreseeable developments, resulting in cumulative effects on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises.

Agricultural cumulative effects may arise where the Proposed Development coincides spatially or temporally with other committed developments, resulting in additional temporary disturbance to agricultural land, agricultural holdings or farm enterprises. Potential cumulative effects may include temporary disruption to farm access, increased construction activity, disturbance to agricultural operations or additional pressure on local road networks used for agricultural purposes.

The list of cumulative developments was derived from the cumulative impacts tiers register prepared for the EIAR. As the potential for cumulative agricultural effects is dependent on the interaction between developments and agricultural receptors, each project was subject to an agronomy-specific screening exercise to determine whether there was a realistic pathway for cumulative effects.

The screening considered the following criteria:

- Proximity of the development to the Proposed Development;
- Whether the development affected agricultural land or agricultural holdings;
- The potential for overlap of construction activities or construction programmes;
- The potential for shared construction access routes, haul roads or traffic routes affecting agricultural operations;
- The potential for cumulative temporary or permanent land take;
- The potential for cumulative disruption to agricultural access, drainage, field management or other farming activities; and
- The likelihood that the same agricultural holdings or farm enterprises could be affected by both developments.

Projects that did not present a realistic potential for cumulative effects on agricultural receptors were scoped out of the detailed cumulative assessment. The reasons for inclusion or exclusion of each project are presented in Section 8.4. For those developments screened into the assessment, professional judgement was applied to determine whether the combined effects of the developments, together with the Proposed Development, would give rise to likely significant cumulative effects on agricultural receptors.

8.4 Baseline Environment

8.4.1 Geographic Scope

The Proposed Development extends across Counties Mayo and Sligo and comprises pipeline infrastructure, associated temporary construction working areas and permanent infrastructure sites. The agricultural assessment applies to all agricultural parcels directly intersected by the Proposed Development within the Planning Application Boundary, including lands associated with the pipeline route corridor and permanent infrastructure sites.

The geographic distribution of the agricultural baseline, including the agricultural profile of Counties Mayo and Sligo and the distribution of affected agricultural parcels and enterprise types, is presented in Section 8.4 (Baseline Environment).

8.4.2 Agricultural land use and farming profile

The Proposed Development is located within Counties Mayo and Sligo in the west of Ireland. The pipeline infrastructure will be predominantly routed within existing public road corridors, limiting interaction with agricultural

land. However, sections of the pipeline route will extend through adjoining agricultural parcels where temporary construction working areas are required to facilitate construction of the pipeline and associated infrastructure.

Agriculture represents the dominant rural land use across Counties Mayo and Sligo. Farming systems are strongly influenced by the Atlantic climate, characterised by relatively high annual rainfall, mild temperatures and a long grass-growing season. Topography ranges from lowland improved grassland to extensive upland terrain characteristic of western Ireland. These physical characteristics, together with soil type, drainage and elevation, have resulted in a predominance of grass-based livestock farming, while intensive tillage and horticultural enterprises are generally confined to the more productive lowland areas.

Agricultural land across much of western Ireland is characterised by a combination of shallow mineral soils, peat soils, imperfectly to poorly drained soils, areas of rock outcrop, steep gradients and upland commonage. These physical constraints limit agricultural intensification and the use of large agricultural machinery, resulting in predominantly extensive grass-based livestock production, principally beef and sheep enterprises. In many upland and marginal areas, land capability is further constrained by reduced trafficability arising from prolonged periods of high soil moisture, peat formation and seasonal waterlogging. Consequently, agricultural production is generally less intensive than that associated with the deeper, freer-draining mineral soils that occur more extensively across the Midlands, southern and eastern regions of Ireland.

These characteristics influence the sensitivity of agricultural holdings to temporary disturbance, as soils are generally more susceptible to structural damage, rutting and drainage disruption if construction activities are undertaken under unsuitable ground conditions. These characteristics have therefore been taken into account in the assessment of likely effects and in the development of mitigation measures.

These physical and climatic characteristics underpin the agricultural profile of Counties Mayo and Sligo and provide important context for understanding the agricultural baseline and the nature of the holdings affected by the Proposed Development.

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Farm Structure Survey (2023), County Mayo contains approximately 11,670 agricultural holdings with an average utilised agricultural area (UAA) of 29.7 ha, while County Sligo contains approximately 4,086 agricultural holdings with an average utilised agricultural area (UAA) of 27.7 ha. Both counties have average farm sizes below the national average of 34.7 ha and are characterised by predominantly grass-based livestock enterprises, principally specialist beef and sheep production. Table 8-7 and Table 8-8 summarise the principal agricultural characteristics and enterprise profile of both counties and provide the regional agricultural baseline against which the agricultural effects of the Proposed Development have been assessed.

The regional agricultural baseline provides the context against which the agricultural effects of the Proposed Development have been assessed.

Table 8-7 — Agricultural profile of Counties Mayo and Sligo based on the CSO Farm Structure Survey 2023

County	Agricultural holdings (No.)	Total utilised agricultural area (ha)	Average farm size (ha)
Mayo	11,670	~346,600 ha	29.7
Sligo	4,086	~113,200 ha	27.7

Table 8-8 — Farm enterprise profile by county (CSO Farm Structure Survey 2023)

County	Specialist tillage	Specialist dairying	Specialist beef production	Specialist sheep	Mixed grazing livestock	Mixed crops and livestock	Mixed field crops	Other	Total
Mayo	15	258	6775	2973	816	9	743	81	11670
Sligo	..	106	2,628	777	278	..	256	33	4,086

The CSO data demonstrate that specialist beef and sheep production dominate the agricultural economy of both counties, reflecting the climatic, topographical and soil conditions that favour extensive grass-based livestock systems over more intensive forms of agricultural production. This regional agricultural profile is reflected within the study area, where the majority of agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development are associated with grassland and livestock enterprises.

Following establishment of the regional agricultural baseline, the assessment considers the agricultural holdings directly affected by the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development intersects 36 agricultural parcels, comprising 32 parcels in County Mayo and four parcels in County Sligo. These parcels represent the agricultural receptors assessed within this chapter. Table 8-9 summarises the distribution of affected agricultural parcels by county together with the average farm size reported by the CSO Farm Structure Survey (2023).

Table 8-9 — Agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development by county

County	Affected agricultural parcels (No.)	Average farm size (ha) (CSO 2023)
Mayo	32	29.7
Sligo	4	27.7

8.4.2.1 Agricultural Land Use – Study Area

A total of 36 agricultural parcels is directly affected by the Proposed Development. Of these, 34 parcels are associated with the pipeline infrastructure, and two parcels are associated with the permanent infrastructure sites comprising the BPS and BPT.

Each affected agricultural parcel was assigned an agricultural enterprise classification based on field survey observations, consultation with landowners (where available), desktop review and professional judgement. This classification was used to characterise the agricultural baseline and inform the assessment of potential effects on agricultural enterprises.

Table 8-10 summarises the dominant farm enterprise types represented across the agricultural parcels directly affected by the Proposed Development. Each affected agricultural parcel was assigned a Farm Enterprise Primary Use (FEPU) based on field survey observations, consultation with landowners (where available), desktop review and professional judgement. The FEPU represents the principal agricultural enterprise or land use associated with the affected parcel and has been used to characterise the agricultural baseline and inform the assessment of effects. For the purposes of this chapter and the accompanying appendices, simplified FEPU category headings are used within tables to improve readability. These comprise:

- Drystock (including beef, suckler and contract rearing enterprises);
- Dairy;
- Sheep;
- Equine;
- Tillage (including all land tilled or managed for tillage, whether privately owned, leased or forming part of a mixed enterprise);
- Mixed Livestock (comprising a combination of sheep, equine and/or drystock enterprises);
- Horticulture;
- Grassland (including grazing, silage production, hay production and leased grassland);
- Forestry.

Table 8-10 — Dominant agricultural enterprise classification of affected agricultural parcels

Farm Enterprise Type	Affected agricultural parcels (No.)	Percentage of affected agricultural parcels (%)
Drystock	6	16.7%
Dairy	1	2.8%
Sheep	10	27.8%
Equine	2	5.6%
Tillage	0	0%
Mixed Livestock	5	13.9%
Horticulture	0	0%
Grassland	12	33.3%
Forestry	0	0%

* **Note:** Agricultural parcels were assigned a dominant enterprise or land use classification using information obtained during field survey, consultation with landowners (where available), desktop review and professional judgement.

Grassland (33.3%) and sheep enterprises (27.8%) account for the majority of agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development, reflecting the predominantly extensive grass-based livestock systems that characterise the agricultural landscape of Counties Mayo and Sligo. Drystock enterprises account for a further 16.7% of affected parcels, while dairy and equine enterprises comprise only a small proportion. No horticultural, tillage or forestry land uses or enterprises were identified amongst the agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development.

8.4.3 Soil Type

The soil resource underlying the Proposed Development is described in detail in Chapter 9 (Land, Soils and Geology). That chapter characterises the baseline soils, superficial deposits and geological conditions using information obtained from the Irish Soil Information System, Geological Survey Ireland mapping and site-specific ground investigation.

From an agricultural perspective, soil type is a key determinant of agricultural land capability and influences drainage characteristics, trafficability, grazing potential, machinery access, crop suitability and the overall intensity of agricultural production. Across Counties Mayo and Sligo, agricultural land is generally characterised by a combination of mineral soils of varying drainage classes together with localised areas of peat, shallow soils and rock outcrop.

These characteristics are consistent with the predominantly grass-based livestock farming systems described in Section 8.4.2.

Within the study area, the agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development are underlain by a range of soil associations including well-drained and poorly drained mineral soils, shallow soils associated with rock outcrop, and localised areas of blanket peat. The occurrence of peat is principally confined to the upland section of the route in the vicinity of the proposed Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank and adjoining pipeline route corridor, while the majority of agricultural parcels affected by the Proposed Development comprise mineral soils that support permanent grassland and livestock production.

From an agricultural perspective, these soils generally exhibit poor drainage, reduced trafficability and lower agricultural capability than the free-draining mineral soils characteristic of eastern Ireland. The agricultural implications of these soil conditions, including the potential for temporary disturbance to soil structure, drainage and agricultural productivity during construction, are considered in the assessment of effects presented later in this chapter.

8.4.4 Future Baseline

In the absence of the Proposed Development, the future baseline within the study area is expected to remain predominantly rural, with agriculture continuing as the principal land use across the agricultural parcels assessed. Grassland-based livestock enterprises, particularly beef and sheep production, are expected to remain the dominant farming systems, reflecting the prevailing climatic conditions, topography, land capability and soil characteristics of Counties Mayo and Sligo.

While gradual changes in farm structure and agricultural management practices may occur over time in response to generational succession, agricultural policy, market conditions and technological change, no substantial change in agricultural land use or the overall pattern of farming within the study area is anticipated over the lifetime of the Proposed Development. Consequently, the agricultural baseline described in this chapter is expected to remain broadly representative in the absence of the Proposed Development.

8.5 Assessment of Effects

The following sections present an assessment of the potential significant agricultural effects associated with the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development, with reference to the appraisal methods described in Section 8.3.6.

This section presents an assessment in the absence of mitigation measures, with the exception of embedded mitigation incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development (for example, through design and routing decisions made during the project development process). Mitigation measures proposed to prevent or reduce potential significant effects are outlined in Section 8.6, while residual effects following implementation of mitigation are described in Section 8.7.

Land will be required for the construction of the Proposed Development. The extent of land affected for each agricultural parcel, including whether the land requirement is temporary or permanent, is detailed in Appendix 8-2 and 8-3.

Construction of the pipeline infrastructure will require a temporary construction working width generally approximately 20 m wide along sections of the route where the pipeline infrastructure traverses agricultural land.

The treated water trunk main network and raw water rising main will incorporate associated pipeline infrastructure fittings including sluice valves, scour valves, air valves, hydrants and flow meters, as described in Chapter 3 – Project

Description. Permanent land take will occur at infrastructure sites located within agricultural land, namely the BPS and BPT.

8.5.1 Do-nothing Scenario

Under the Do-Nothing Scenario, the Proposed Development would not proceed and, therefore, no project-related effects on agricultural land, agricultural holdings or farm enterprises would occur. Existing agricultural land use and farming activities would continue in accordance with current management practices, and any future changes would occur independently of the Proposed Development. Where land parcels are connected to the existing water supply, these landowners would continue to be at risk to ongoing water capacity and security shortfalls that the Proposed Development aims to address.

8.5.2 Construction Phase Assessment of Effects

The Construction Phase has the potential to result in temporary and permanent effects on agricultural land, agricultural holdings and farm enterprises where the Proposed Development intersects agricultural land. These effects are associated with the installation of the raw water rising main between Lisglennon Raw Water Pumping Station (RWPS) and Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (WTP), the treated water trunk main extending from Lisglennon WTP to the existing Lough Talt WTP site, and the construction of the BPS and BPT.

Although the majority of the treated water trunk main will be installed within existing public road corridors, approximately 4.2 km of the pipeline infrastructure will traverse agricultural land where Temporary Construction Working Areas will be required. Consequently, construction-related effects are localised to the agricultural holdings directly intersected by the Proposed Development. No individual agricultural holding is expected to experience all of the potential effects identified below; rather, each holding may experience one or a combination of effects depending on the extent of the works, the characteristics of the holding and the nature of the agricultural enterprise.

Detailed assessments of individual agricultural holdings are provided in Appendix 8-2 (Pipeline Infrastructure) and Appendix 8-3 (Infrastructure Sites). The principal Construction Phase effects are summarised below.

During construction, the Contractor shall comply with all national animal health and biosecurity requirements in force at the time of construction, including any disease control measures, movement restrictions or exclusion zones implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) or other competent authority. Where required, additional site-specific biosecurity measures shall be implemented in consultation with affected landowners and the relevant authorities to minimise the risk of disease transmission between agricultural holdings. These measures may include, where appropriate, vehicle and equipment cleaning and disinfection, restrictions on site access, timing of works and other precautionary measures considered necessary at the time of construction.

Temporary Construction Effects

- Temporary Working Area: temporary occupation of agricultural land within the Temporary Construction Working Area resulting in a short-term reduction in land area available for agricultural production or use;
- Temporary severance of agricultural parcels where the construction corridor restricts movement between fields or parts of an agricultural holding;
- Temporary disruption to access to lands, including farm entrances, internal farm roadways and shared rights-of-way;
- Disturbance to the soil profile associated with excavation, soil stripping, storage, excavation and reinstatement;
- Potential disturbance to existing field drainage systems;
- Potential temporary disruption to farm infrastructure and services, including fencing, livestock drinkers, water supply pipework, electricity supply, and livestock handling facilities;

- Removal of trees, hedgerows or other boundary vegetation where required within the Temporary Working Area;
- Temporary visual and physical disturbance to agricultural land during the construction period;
- Temporary disturbance to livestock associated with construction noise, vibration and increased construction activity in proximity to agricultural holdings.

Permanent Effects

- Establishment of a permanent pipeline route easement, with associated restrictions on certain activities, including construction of permanent structures, deep excavation and tree planting;
- Permanent land take associated with the BPS and BPT.

8.5.2.1 Proposed Development – Predicted Construction Phase Effects

The Construction Phase assessment considered the likely effects of the Proposed Development on each agricultural holding. In undertaking the assessment, account was taken of the extent of temporary and permanent land take, the proportion of each affected parcel impacted, the type and sensitivity of the farm enterprise, potential severance of agricultural parcels, disruption to farm access and internal roadways, effects on farm infrastructure (including fencing, livestock drinkers, electricity supply and handling facilities), and potential disturbance to soils and field drainage systems within the construction corridor.

The magnitude and significance of predicted effects vary depending on the characteristics of each agricultural holding. Factors influencing the assessment include the location of the Proposed Development within the holding, the role of the affected land within the farm enterprise, the intensity of agricultural use, and the presence of agricultural infrastructure within the Temporary Working Area (TWA). Consequently, while no individual holding is expected to experience all potential effects identified, some holdings may experience a combination of temporary impacts during construction.

During the Construction Phase, land within the TWA associated with the pipeline infrastructure installation, together with areas required for the BPS and BPT, will be temporarily unavailable for agricultural use. Construction activities may also give rise to temporary disturbance of soils, field drainage systems, farm access and agricultural infrastructure, all of which will be reinstated following completion of the works, except where permanent infrastructure is required.

The significance of effects was determined through professional judgement based on the sensitivity of each agricultural holding and the magnitude and duration of the predicted effects, informed by agricultural surveys, landowner consultation and the methodology described in Section 8.3.

The detailed pre-mitigation assessment is presented in Appendix 8-2 (Pipeline Infrastructure) and Appendix 8-3 (Infrastructure Sites), with a summary provided in Table 8-11 and Table 8-12.

Table 8-11 — Pipeline Infrastructure: Summary of Predicted Construction Phase Effects on Farms (Pre Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Dairy (1)	0	0	0	0	1
Drystock (6)	0	0	2	3	1

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Equine (2)	0	0	1	0	1
Grassland (11)	0	3	4	4	0
Mixed Livestock (4)	0	1	1	2	0
Sheep (10)	0	8	1	1	0
Total: 34	0	12	9	10	3

The Significant and Moderate effects are principally associated with temporary land take, disruption to agricultural access, parcel severance and the presence of farm infrastructure within the construction corridor.

Prior to mitigation, 34 agricultural parcels associated with the pipeline infrastructure are predicted to experience direct agricultural effects. Of these, three parcels are predicted to experience Significant effects, ten parcels Moderate effects, nine parcels Slight effects and twelve parcels Not Significant effects.

The results of the pre mitigation assessment of effects of the Infrastructure Sites during the Construction Phase at an individual farm level are summarised in Table 8-12. Full details of the assessment can be found in Appendix 8-3.

Table 8-12 — Infrastructure Sites: Summary of Predicted Construction Phase Effects on Farms (Pre Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Grassland (1)	0	0	0	1	0
Mixed Livestock (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Total: 2	0	0	1	1	0

The Moderate effect relates primarily to the permanent land take associated with the proposed infrastructure site.

Prior to mitigation, two agricultural parcels associated with the infrastructure sites are predicted to be affected. One parcel is predicted to experience a Moderate effect, while the remaining parcel is predicted to experience a Slight effect.

8.5.3 Operational Phase Assessment of Effects

Following completion of construction and reinstatement, the majority of the Proposed Development will comprise buried pipeline infrastructure located beneath existing public roads and agricultural land. Agricultural activities will generally be able to resume across the affected holdings, with the principal Operational Phase effects relating to permanent wayleave restrictions, permanent infrastructure sites and periodic inspection and maintenance activities.

The Operational Phase assessment has considered the likely effects of the Proposed Development on each agricultural holding directly affected by the pipeline infrastructure and the permanent infrastructure sites. The assessment considers the permanent land requirements of the Proposed Development together with any ongoing constraints on agricultural land use and farm management. Detailed parcel-level assessments are provided in Appendix 8-2 – Pipeline Infrastructure Agricultural Impact Assessment and Appendix 8-3 – Infrastructure Sites Agricultural Impact Assessment.

The principal Operational Phase effects identified are:

- Permanent land acquisition associated with the Booster Pumping Station and Break Pressure Tank;
- Permanent above-ground infrastructure associated with the Booster Pumping Station;
- Permanent pipeline easement restrictions over buried pipeline infrastructure;
- Permanent fencing, gates and associated access arrangements at infrastructure sites;
- Periodic inspection, maintenance and emergency repair activities requiring temporary access to agricultural lands;
- Localised operational noise and external lighting associated with the Booster Pumping Station;
- Restrictions on deep excavation, construction of permanent structures and tree planting within the permanent wayleave.

Table 8-13 — Pipeline Infrastructure: Summary of Predicted Operational Phase Effects on Farms (Pre Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Dairy (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Drystock (6)	0	4	2	0	0
Equine (2)	0	1	1	0	0
Grassland (11)	0	5	6	0	0
Mixed Livestock (4)	0	3	1	0	0
Sheep (10)	0	7	3	0	0
Total: 34	0	20	14	0	0

The Operational Phase assessment indicates that the agricultural holdings affected by the pipeline infrastructure are predicted to experience either Not Significant (not significant) or Slight (not significant) effects. These effects principally relate to the presence of permanent wayleave restrictions over the buried pipeline infrastructure, which limit deep excavation, the construction of permanent structures and tree planting within the wayleave corridor. Normal agricultural activities, including grazing and grassland management, are expected to continue following reinstatement. No Moderate or Significant Operational Phase effects are predicted for the pipeline infrastructure.

The permanent infrastructure sites give rise to a greater level of Operational Phase effect due to the permanent acquisition of agricultural land and the presence of above-ground infrastructure. The Booster Pumping Station results in the permanent loss of productive agricultural land together with permanent buildings, security fencing and associated operational activities. In contrast, the Break Pressure Tank occupies a very small area of upland commonage and, although permanently acquired, represents less than 1% of the affected commonage area. Seasonal sheep grazing will continue across the remaining commonage.

Table 8-14 — Infrastructure Sites: Summary of Predicted Operational Phase Effects on Farms (Pre Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Grassland (1)	0	0	0	1	0
Mixed Livestock (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Total: 2	0	0	1	1	0

Overall, the Operational Phase assessment demonstrates that the majority of agricultural holdings affected by the Proposed Development are predicted to experience either Not Significant (not significant) or Slight (not significant) effects. These effects are primarily associated with permanent wayleave restrictions over the buried pipeline infrastructure, which do not prevent the continuation of normal agricultural activities following reinstatement. Greater Operational Phase effects are limited to a small number of holdings where permanent infrastructure, permanent land acquisition or associated operational activities give rise to increased long-term constraints on agricultural use. Detailed holding-specific assessments are presented in Appendix 8-2 and Appendix 8-3.

8.5.4 Cumulative Effects Assessment

The cumulative assessment considers the potential for the Proposed Development to act in combination with other committed developments identified in the cumulative developments register prepared for the EIAR. Projects were screened to determine whether there was a realistic potential for cumulative effects on agricultural receptors.

Table 8-15 — Screening & Assessment of Potential Cumulative Developments

Planning Ref	Development	Screening Decision	Agronomy Justification
19393	Belleek Castle Café Extension and Museum	Scoped In	Although the development is confined to the existing Belleek Castle property and does not involve agricultural land, it is located alongside the proposed treated water trunk main. If construction activities were to occur concurrently, there is potential for temporary cumulative effects relating to construction traffic, access arrangements and site activity. Any interaction would be localised, temporary and can be effectively managed through coordination between contractors and the landowner. No significant cumulative effects on agricultural land or farm operations are anticipated.
2360261	Glenree–Moy 110 kV Overhead Line Uprating	Scoped In	The project intersects the proposed treated water trunk main corridor and includes works within agricultural land, including temporary access tracks, construction compounds and replacement of poles and towers. Where both projects affect the same agricultural holdings during overlapping construction periods, there is potential for temporary cumulative disturbance to farming activities and agricultural access. However, the works are localised and short in duration, with most activities confined to existing infrastructure corridors. Through coordination of construction programmes and liaison with affected landowners, any cumulative effects would be temporary and not significant.

Two developments were identified as having the potential to interact with the Proposed Development from an agronomy perspective. The proposed extension at Belleek Castle is largely confined to the existing developed property and does not directly affect agricultural land. However, as it is located adjacent to a section of the proposed treated water trunk main, there is potential for temporary cumulative effects associated with construction traffic and access should both projects be undertaken concurrently.

The Glenree–Moy 110 kV Overhead Line Uprating project intersects the proposed treated water trunk main at a number of locations and may include temporary works within agricultural land. Where construction activities overlap spatially and temporally, there is potential for temporary cumulative disturbance to agricultural access and farming operations. Given the limited footprint and short duration of the works, together with coordination between project teams and ongoing communication with affected landowners, significant cumulative effects on agricultural receptors are not anticipated.

In conclusion, the identified cumulative effects are temporary, localised and confined to the construction phase. Through coordination of construction activities, maintenance of agricultural access where required, reinstatement of affected land, and ongoing liaison with affected landowners, the Proposed Development is not expected to give rise to likely significant cumulative effects on agricultural land, agricultural holdings or farm enterprises.

8.6 Mitigation

8.6.1 Embedded Mitigation

The environmental assessment team has worked in collaboration with the infrastructure design team to avoid or reduce environmental effects through the design of the Proposed Development. These measures are referred to as embedded mitigation, meaning they form part of the project design and construction methodology described in Chapter 3 – Project Description of the EIAR.

Embedded mitigation measures incorporated into the Proposed Development include the following:

- The treated water trunk main network has been routed predominantly along existing road corridors, where practicable, thereby reducing the extent of interaction with agricultural land.
- Only limited sections of the pipeline route traverse agricultural land (approximately 4.2 km), thereby minimising potential impacts on agricultural landholdings.
- Pipeline infrastructure will be installed underground, allowing agricultural lands affected during construction to be reinstated and returned to agricultural use following completion of works.
- The BPS and BPT infrastructure sites have been designed with relatively small footprints, thereby minimising permanent land take within agricultural lands.
- The Windy Gap BPT will be constructed as a buried reinforced concrete structure, reducing potential surface disturbance and landscape impacts.

These embedded mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development and have therefore been taken into account in the assessment of Operational and Construction Phase effects presented in this chapter.

8.6.2 Additional Mitigation Measures

Additional mitigation measures are proposed to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects on agricultural land, farming activities and agricultural infrastructure during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development. These

measures supplement the embedded mitigation incorporated into the project design and will be implemented through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Where appropriate, monitoring will be undertaken, implemented by the Appointed Contractor, during construction to confirm that mitigation measures are implemented effectively. The Contractor shall comply with all national animal health and biosecurity requirements in force at the time of construction, including any disease control measures, movement restrictions or exclusion zones implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) or other competent authority. Where required, additional site-specific biosecurity measures will be implemented in consultation with affected landowners and the relevant authorities to minimise the potential for disease transmission between agricultural holdings.

Where agricultural land is permanently acquired or temporary disturbance to agricultural land occurs, compensation will be addressed through the applicable statutory processes and any agreements between Uisce Éireann and affected landowners. As compensation does not constitute environmental mitigation, it has not been taken into account in the assessment of effects or residual effects presented in this chapter.

8.6.2.1 Construction Phase Mitigation

A range of mitigation measures will be implemented during the Construction Phase to avoid or minimise potential effects on agricultural land, farming operations and agricultural infrastructure. These measures complement the embedded mitigation incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development and will be implemented through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and associated method statements. The measures presented in Table 8-16 have been taken into account in the assessment of residual effects presented in Section 8.7 and the holding-specific assessments contained within Appendix 8-2 and Appendix 8-3.

Table 8-16 — Construction Phase Mitigation Measures for Agricultural Receptors

Mitigation Topic	Mitigation Measures
Land Access and Farm Operations	Construction activities will be confined to the defined working areas associated with the pipeline infrastructure installation. Temporary disturbance to agricultural land will be minimised and agricultural land will be reinstated to its pre-construction condition following completion of the works. Access to agricultural land will be maintained, where practicable, throughout the construction period and temporary access arrangements will be provided where existing farm access routes are disrupted.
Liaison with Landholders	Ongoing communication will be maintained with affected landowners and land users before and during construction. Construction activities will, where practicable, be coordinated with farming operations to minimise disruption to agricultural activities.
Protection of Farm Infrastructure and Services	Existing agricultural infrastructure, including fencing, gates, water supplies, livestock drinking troughs and other farm services, will be protected where practicable. Any infrastructure temporarily removed or disturbed during construction will be reinstated or suitable temporary alternative arrangements provided, where required.
Soil Handling and Land Reinstatement	Topsoil and subsoil will be stripped, stored and reinstated separately to preserve soil structure and agricultural productivity. Following pipeline infrastructure installation, disturbed agricultural land will be regraded, reinstated to pre-construction levels and reseeded, where appropriate, to facilitate the return of agricultural use.
Protection of Field Drainage	Existing agricultural drainage systems encountered during construction will be identified and protected where practicable. Where field drains are intercepted, they will be reinstated or replaced as necessary to maintain existing drainage function and agricultural productivity.

Mitigation Topic	Mitigation Measures
Biosecurity	The Contractor will implement appropriate biosecurity measures throughout the construction period. Construction machinery will arrive on site clean and free of soil and vegetation, equipment will be cleaned where required before moving between locations, and all works will comply with the biosecurity and environmental management procedures contained within the CEMP together with any animal health or disease control measures in force at the time of construction.

8.6.2.2 Operational Phase Mitigation

No additional Operational Phase mitigation measures are proposed beyond the embedded mitigation incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development. The treated water pipeline infrastructure will remain buried below ground, allowing agricultural activities to continue across the majority of affected land subject to the permanent wayleave restrictions. Operational effects are primarily associated with permanent wayleave restrictions, permanent infrastructure sites and routine inspection and maintenance activities. These effects have been taken into account in the Operational Phase assessment. Routine inspection and maintenance activities will be undertaken in accordance with Uisce Éireann operational procedures and access to agricultural land will be managed in consultation with affected landowners where required.

8.7 Residual Effects

8.7.1 Construction Phase Residual Effects

The residual effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural holdings during the Construction Phase have been assessed following implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures described in Section 8.6. The residual Construction Phase effects for the pipeline infrastructure and permanent infrastructure sites are summarised in Table 8-17 and Table 8-18. Detailed holding-specific residual assessments are provided in Appendix 8-2 – Pipeline Infrastructure Agricultural Impact Assessment and Appendix 8-3 – Infrastructure Sites Agricultural Impact Assessment.

Table 8-17 — Pipeline Infrastructure - Summary of Predicted Construction Phase Effects on Farms (Post Mitigation) by Number of Agricultural Parcels

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Dairy (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Drystock (6)	0	2	4	0	0
Equine (2)	0	1	1	0	0
Grassland (11)	0	7	4	0	0

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Mixed Livestock (4)	0	2	2	0	0
Sheep (10)	0	9	1	0	0
Total: 34	**0**	**21**	**13**	**0**	**0**

Following implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, all residual Construction Phase effects associated with the pipeline infrastructure are predicted to be either Not Significant (not significant) or Slight (not significant). Of the 34 agricultural parcels assessed, 21 are predicted to experience Not Significant residual effects and 13 are predicted to experience Slight residual effects.

Overall, the implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures is predicted to reduce all Construction Phase effects on agricultural receptors to Not Significant (not significant) or Slight (not significant) residual effects.

Table 8-18 — Infrastructure Sites: Summary of Predicted Construction Phase Effects on Farms (Post Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Grassland (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Mixed Livestock (1)	0	1	0	0	0
Total: 2	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**

Following implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, two agricultural parcels associated with the permanent infrastructure sites are predicted to experience residual effects. One parcel is predicted to experience a Not Significant (not significant) residual effect, while the remaining parcel is predicted to experience a Slight (not significant) residual effect.

Overall, the implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures is predicted to reduce all Construction Phase effects on agricultural receptors to Not Significant (not significant) or Slight (not significant) residual effects.

8.7.2 Operational Phase Residual Effects

The residual Operational Phase effects have been assessed following implementation of the embedded mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development. No additional Operational Phase mitigation

measures are proposed beyond those described in Section 8.6.2.2. The residual Operational Phase effects for the pipeline infrastructure and permanent infrastructure sites are summarised in Table 8-19 and Table 8-20. Detailed holding-specific residual assessments are presented in Appendix 8-2 and Appendix 8-3.

Table 8-19 — Pipeline Infrastructure - Summary of Predicted Operational Phase Residual Effects (Post - Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Dairy (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Drystock (6)	0	3	3	0	0
Equine (2)	0	1	1	0	0
Grassland (11)	0	5	6	0	0
Mixed Livestock (4)	0	3	1	0	0
Sheep (10)	0	6	4	0	0
Total: 34	**0**	**18**	**16**	**0**	**0**

Following implementation of the embedded mitigation measures, agricultural parcels affected by the pipeline infrastructure are predicted to experience either Not Significant (18 parcels) or Slight (16 parcels) residual Operational Phase effects. The Slight residual effects relate principally to permanent wayleave restrictions and routine inspection and maintenance activities associated with the buried pipeline infrastructure.

Table 8-20 — Infrastructure Sites: Summary of Predicted Operational Phase Residual Effects (Post - Mitigation)

Farm Enterprise Detail	Imperceptible (not significant)	Not Significant (not significant)	Slight (not significant)	Moderate (significant)	Significant (significant)
Grassland (1)	0	0	0	1	0
Mixed Livestock (1)	0	0	1	0	0
Total: 2	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**

Following implementation of the embedded mitigation measures, residual Operational Phase effects associated with the permanent infrastructure sites remain limited. The Booster Pumping Station is predicted to continue to result in a Moderate (significant) residual effect due to the permanent loss of productive agricultural land and the presence of permanent above-ground infrastructure. The Break Pressure Tank is predicted to result in a Slight (not significant) residual effect, reflecting the limited extent of permanent land acquisition within the affected commonage.

Overall, following implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures, the Proposed Development is predicted to result in predominantly Not Significant (not significant) and Slight (not significant) residual effects on agricultural receptors. Residual effects are principally associated with permanent wayleave restrictions over the buried pipeline infrastructure and permanent land acquisition at the Booster Pumping Station and Break Pressure Tank. Detailed residual assessments for each affected agricultural parcel are presented in Appendix 8-2 and Appendix 8-3.

8.8 References

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