



PLANNING REPORT

JULY 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Report Context

The Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended) (“the 2001 Act”) provides for the making of a Railway Order (“RO”) application by Córas Iompair Éireann (“CIÉ” or “the Applicant”) to An Bord Pleanála (“the Board”). In this application CIÉ is applying to the Board for an RO, to be known as the DART+ Coastal North project (hereafter “the Proposed Development”).

The RO application is made under Section 37 of the 2001 Act and a number of legislative amendments and substitutions have been made to the process by the European Union (Railway Orders) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 743 of 2021).

Among the matters which the Board is required to consider when an application is made for an RO, in this case for DART+ Coastal North, are the matters referred to in Section 143 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) by virtue of Section 43(1)(h) of the 2001 Act.

Accordingly, the Board, in the performance of its functions is required to have regard *inter alia* to:

- (a) the policies and objectives for the time being of the Government, a State authority, the Minister, planning authorities and any other body which is a public authority whose functions have, or may have, a bearing on the proper planning and sustainable development of cities, towns or other areas, whether urban or rural;
- (b) the national interest and any effect the performance of the Board’s functions may have on issues of strategic economic or social importance to the State, and
- (c) the National Planning Framework and any regional spatial and economic strategy for the time being in force.

The purpose of this Planning Report is to assist the Board in its assessment of the RO Application relating to planning policy. The Planning Report is not a legislative requirement but is a supporting document of the RO application. This planning report therefore addresses:

- The policies and objectives for the time being of the Government, a State authority, the Minister, planning authorities and any other body which is a public authority whose functions have, or may have, a bearing on the proper planning and sustainable development of cities, towns or other areas, whether urban or rural
- The National Planning Framework and any regional spatial and economic strategy for the time being in force.

By way of summary and before examining these matters in more detail, Project Ireland 2040 (Building Ireland’s Future) presents the overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all. Project Ireland 2040 is made up of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan.

By 2040 it is expected that an additional 1 million people will live in Ireland, with an additional 667,000 people working. This will place a huge increase in demand for travelling to work, education and services. Whilst the National Planning Framework sets out the sustainable spatial development strategy for Ireland, it is the National Development Plan which sets out the infrastructural investment programme to support implementation of this spatial strategy.

The National Development Plan involves investment of approximately €116 billion in infrastructure to support the ten national strategic outcomes (NSOs) of Project Ireland 2040. The DART+ Programme is a cornerstone infrastructural investment that enables a number of the Strategic Outcomes, namely:

- Enabling compact growth along public transport corridors (NSO 1);
- Proving sustainable mobility (NSO 4); and
- Facilitating a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (NSO 8).

The National Development Plan commits Exchequer funding to public investment projects that have sufficiently matured through the planning and technical evaluation process.

The National Development Plan states that the DART+ Programme is the cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Iarnród Éireann (IE) network.

The National Development Plan describes the DART+ Programme based on a number of discrete infrastructure delivery projects. These discrete projects are:

- DART+ Fleet – expansion of both battery-electric multiple units (BEMUs) and electric multiple units (EMUs);
- DART+ West;
- DART+ South West;
- DART+ Coastal North; and
- DART+ Coastal South.

The Government, in December 2021, approved the Preliminary Business Case (PBC) for the DART+ Programme. The PBC was constructed on the principle of the discreet individual project descriptions. The PBC approval authorised the award of a fleet procurement contract for new electric and battery/electric trains.

The National Development Plan acknowledges the long-term planning necessary to give effect to Project Ireland objectives. Long term funding is allocated to deliver on these requirements and a disaggregated capital profile is determined in accordance with the Department of Transport requirements.

The Transport Strategy and the National Development Plan are fully aligned. The National Transport Authority has prepared and adopted the new Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042. This strategy document also describes the DART+ Programme based on discrete infrastructural delivery projects, which can be delivered sequentially to deliver incremental capacity improvements and ultimately delivering the necessary longer-term capacity necessary across the network. The Strategy also acknowledges that the current DART+ Programme may be further expanded to meet further growth requirements.

1.2 Purpose and Structure of this Report

The purpose of this Planning Report is to present the planning issues associated with the Proposed Development and to assist the Board in determining whether the Proposed Development is in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and accordingly whether statutory consent should be granted for the Proposed Development.

The structure of this Planning Report is as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Project Overview
- Chapter 3: Legislative Requirements
- Chapter 4: Consultation
- Chapter 5: Planning Policy Context
- Chapter 6: Conclusion

This Planning Report provides a reference to where further detail on planning policy matters and a reference to where additional information may be found within the RO package.

The content of this report is derived from the RO documents including the EIAR, plans, sections and elevations prepared in accordance with the Statutory Regulations and relevant planning policy documents. When granted, an RO confers powers on CIÉ to allow for the acquisition of land and other rights in relation to land to facilitate the construction, maintenance, improvement and operation of the railway. These matters are addressed during the design and environmental assessment process. The lands are identified in the RO Property Drawings and Schedules and are assessed in the EIAR that accompanies the RO application and are not duplicated in this Planning Report.

- Makes best use of existing rail infrastructure, is not reliant on the delivery of the DART Underground tunnel and is capable of delivering the DART Expansion Programme at a much reduced cost;
- Can be incrementally delivered to gradually unlock benefits as passenger demand levels increase;
- Will integrate better with other public transport schemes, will maximise the patronage of MetroLink, BusConnects and Luas and, will therefore, maximise the investment in these schemes;
- Will relieve some pressure on the Luas Red line in the peak periods, by reducing the need to interchange from/to Luas at Heuston for some journeys; and
- Should act as an interim measure while the DART Underground Project is redesigned to accommodate recent developments in the rail network.

A number of other studies were also undertaken including Transport Assessments. These include the Maynooth Line Transport Study (NTA 2019), the DART Expansion Rail Electrification Assessment (Iarnród Éireann 2019), the DART Underground Western Tie-In Study (NTA 2017) and the Tunnel Configuration Study for new Metro North and DART Underground (NTA/IE/TII 2017).

The outcome of these studies influenced the formulation of Project Ireland 2040 comprising the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) and the supporting investment package contained in the National Development Plan 2018-2027 which was published in February 2018. The National Development Plan recommended that the DART+ Programme (previously termed DART Expansion) should proceed to deliver priority elements including investment in new train fleet, provision of new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines.

The NPF and NDP state that the focus should be on non-underground tunnel elements of the programme using existing tracks (i.e., using the Phoenix Park Tunnel branch line). On the 4 October 2021, the National Development Plan 2021-2030 was published in which the DART+ Programme is considered as the “cornerstone of rail investment” within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040.

Advancement of priority elements of DART+ Programme is now approved in principle under the National Development Plan 2021-2030 and DART+ Coastal North will be the third of the DART+ Programme packages to be lodged with An Bord Pleanála for the approval of a Railway Order application.

2.2 DART+ Programme

The DART+ Programme is a transformative railway investment programme that will deliver a high quality and integrated public transport system within the GDA. The DART+ Programme will both modernise and improve the existing rail services in the GDA, providing a range of benefits for both the residents of the GDA itself, as well as those living in surrounding regions.

The DART+ Programme will play a significant role in contributing to Ireland’s transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society by providing a sustainable, electrified, reliable and more frequent rail service with improved capacity to meet current and future demands. This will be achieved through the modernisation of existing railway corridors and by utilising electric powered trains in place of diesel trains.

The existing, electrified DART network extends from Malahide to Greystones (including the Howth Branch) over a length of approximately 50km. The DART+ Programme will seek to increase the length of high capacity and electrified network to 150km across the four main rail corridors within the GDA. See Figure 2-1 for a schematic of the overall DART+ Programme.

The modernisation includes the electrification, re-signalling and other specific interventions to remove constraints across the four main rail corridors within the GDA, as follows:

- **DART+ Coastal North (this project)** – circa 50km, extending from Drogheda to Dublin City Centre (north of Connolly Station).
- DART+ Coastal South – circa 30km, extending from Greystones to Dublin City Centre.
- DART+ West – circa 40km, extending from Maynooth and M3 Parkway stations to Dublin City Centre.
- DART+ South West – circa 16km, extending from Hazelhatch & Celbridge Station to Heuston Station and also circa 4km between Heuston Station and Glasnevin, via the Phoenix Park Tunnel Branch Line.

As part of the DART+ Programme, IÉ is purchasing a new fleet of trains to enhance the capacity on the DART network. This procurement will allow IÉ to choose a fleet made up of Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) and Battery Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs). The provision of BEMUs will allow for running enhanced services on the network between Drogheda and Dublin City Centre in advance of full electrification. Infrastructural works to enable the operation of the BEMU fleet have been consented by Louth County Council and will be implemented in 2024/25 to enable this.

Customer capacity and train service frequency on these lines will be significantly increased as a result of the DART+ Programme. This will help to deliver a more efficient transport system, allowing more people to make sustainable travel choices that reduce their carbon footprint, improve quality of life factors and reduce road congestion, thereby helping to meet the goals set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan.

The cumulative network effect of DART+ Programme, subject to Government authorisation and funding, will increase customer capacity from circa 26,000 customers per hour per direction (2019) to circa 50,000-60,000 (peak) passengers per hour per direction under the National Development Plan investment and future growth capacity potential to 70,000-80,000 (peak) passengers per hour per direction thereafter, subject to further fleet procurement.

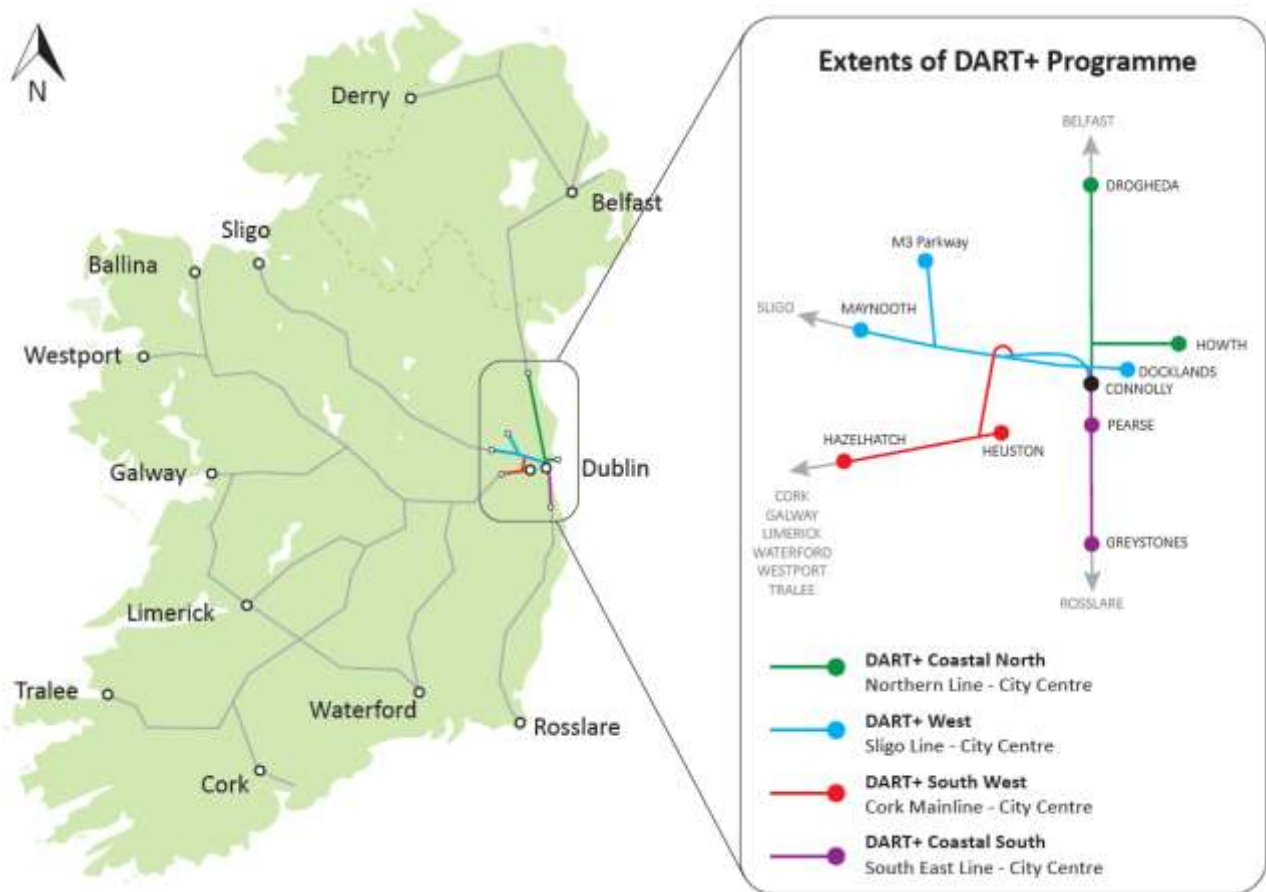


Figure 2-1 Schematic of the Overall DART+ Programme

2.3 DART+ Programme Objectives

DART+ Programme is a transformative programme of projects that aims to modernise and improve existing rail services in the GDA. It will see the DART network grow from its current 50 km in length to over 150 km.

DART+ Programme's primary objective is to support urban compact growth and contribute to reducing transport congestion and emissions in the Dublin region by enhancing the heavy rail network between Dublin City Centre and the areas of Drogheda, Maynooth, Dunboyne, Celbridge and Greystones, providing a sustainable, safe, efficient, integrated and accessible public transport service along these corridors.

Sub-objectives of the DART+ Programme include:

- Cater for existing heavy rail travel demand and support long-term patronage growth along established rail corridors in the Greater Dublin Area through the provision of a higher frequency, higher capacity, electrified heavy rail service which supports sustainable economic development and population growth;
- Improve accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved inter-rail and inter-modal connectivity and integration with other public transport services;

- Enable further urban compact growth along existing rail corridors, unlock regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in the Greater Dublin Area, for present and future generations, through the provision of a higher capacity heavy rail network;
- Deliver an efficient, sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient heavy rail network, which contributes to a reduction in congestion on the road network in the Greater Dublin Area and which supports the advancement of Ireland's transition to a low emissions transport system and delivery of Ireland's emission reduction targets; and
- Provide a higher standard of customer experience including provision of clean, safe, modern vehicles and a reliable and punctual service with regulated and integrated fares.

2.4 DART+ Coastal North Project Objectives

The primary objective of the DART+ Coastal North project is to deliver a higher frequency, higher capacity electrified rail service between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda and to support the rapid transition required to deliver on a low carbon climate resilient transport system.

Below are the sub-objectives for the DART+ Coastal North project:

- To deliver a higher frequency, higher capacity, reliable, electrified route to enable an increased DART service frequency between Drogheda and Dublin City Centre;
- To deliver solutions which improve the passenger experience where passenger infrastructure interventions are required to meet the Train Service Specification;
- To deliver a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient design solution including making use of existing infrastructure where possible with targeted improvement works;
- To identify cost-effective solutions from a capital, operations, and maintenance perspective;
- To minimise adverse impacts on the natural and built environment associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the project;
- To minimise adverse impacts on existing rail services, road users and landowners associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the project; and
- To provide efficient and cost-effective integration of systems with the other DART+ Programme projects.

Delivery of the DART+ Coastal North project will support existing communities along the railway and support future sustainable development. The project will serve all existing stations along the railway corridor between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda MacBride Station, including those located on the Howth Branch, with electric powered trains that have a lower carbon footprint than the existing diesel trains. The frequency and quality of service will provide a viable transport alternative to communities along the route and help encourage people to migrate from private car use. This will assist Ireland in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport and help combat climate change.

2.5 DART+ Coastal North Overview

The DART+ Coastal North project is the third infrastructure project to launch as part of the DART+ Programme. The extents of the DART+ Coastal North project are presented in Figure 2-2. The electrification of the rail line is located predominantly within the existing railway corridor within IÉ/CIE owned lands however some works will involve the acquisition of private lands to facilitate the project.

The DART+ Coastal North project, as part of the DART+ Programme, will deliver an improved and extended electrified rail network and will enable increased passenger capacity and an enhanced train service between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda, including the Howth Branch railway line. This increased rail capacity will be achieved by implementing an extended electrified railway network with high-capacity DART trains and an increased frequency of rail services. In addition, the DART+ Coastal North project requires that some track modifications are implemented, including the provision of turnback facilities at Malahide, Clongriffin and Howth Junction & Donaghmede Stations. These modifications are essential to facilitate the increase in train services by improving operational flexibility, allowing trains to be turned back clear of continuing services and allow for a higher frequency and a more reliable service.

To achieve the peak capacity increases proposed by the DART+ Programme, the DART+ Coastal North project will seek a reconfiguration of Howth Junction and Donaghmede Station to increase capacity and frequency of services on the Northern and Howth Branch Lines. The project is seeking to deliver the infrastructure at Howth Junction and Donaghmede Station that will enable the operation of both a DART shuttle service and/or a direct through service (as existing) on the Howth Branch line to/from Dublin City Centre, allowing for the capacity and frequency of DART+ services on both the Northern and Howth Branch lines to be maximised and to help future-proof the network.

In direct response to feedback received during the first Public Consultation, significant upgrade works, and enhancements are now proposed for Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station to deliver accessibility improvements and provide for a better overall customer experience. The works will involve modifications to the station entrances to provide a more accessible, user friendly and customer focused station for all rail users, as well as enhancing the connection to the surrounding communities of Donaghmede and Kilbarrack. Upgrades are proposed to the existing station footbridge and connections to the centre platforms, as well as to the lighting, signage, and finishes throughout.

Proposed changes to the Howth Branch, will enable both the service frequency and capacity to increase, along with improvements to the reliability of timetabling. The reliability of the Howth Branch will increase as the proposed shuttle service would mean that trains operating on this branch would no longer be susceptible to delays occurring along the Northern Line.

Delivery of the DART+ Coastal North project will support existing communities along the railway and support future sustainable development. The project will serve all existing stations along the railway corridor between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda MacBride Station, including those located on the Howth Branch, with electric powered trains that have a lower carbon footprint than the existing diesel trains. The frequency and quality of service will provide a viable transport alternative to communities along the route and help encourage people to migrate from private car use. This will assist Ireland in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport and help combat climate change.

The majority of proposed works and interventions are expected to be carried out within the existing railway corridor boundary. Some works and interventions, however, will be required outside of IE land such as:

- Bridge modifications/improvements to facilitate extended electrification;
- Construction of substations (to facilitate the provision of power to the line);
- Utility diversions; and

- Use of land for temporary construction/storage compounds.

The key infrastructure elements of the DART+ Coastal North project include:

- Extension of existing 1500V DC electrification, which currently terminates at Malahide, as far as Drogheda MacBride Station (approximately 37km); this includes:
 - The installation of foundations, masts, and overhead wires to supply power to the railway;
 - Undertaking upgrades to existing signalling, telecoms, and power supplies to support the planned increase in train services, including the introduction of new electrical substations at key locations alongside the railway line at:
 - Drogheda;
 - Bettystown;
 - Gormanston;
 - Balbriggan;
 - Skerries North;
 - Skerries South;
 - Rush & Lusk (this location also incorporates an overhead line equipment (OHLE) maintenance compound); and
 - Donabate.
 - Undertaking improvements / modifications to bridges spanning the railway arising from track reconfigurations and / or meeting required electrical clearances;
 - Undertaking localised bridge modifications to enable OHLE to be fixed to bridges carrying the railway;
 - Canopy modifications at Drogheda MacBride Station to accommodate OHLE clearances; and
 - Modified railway boundary fences to protect the public from contacting the overhead line.
- Infrastructure works to facilitate the increase in service frequency and capacity, in specific areas of intervention as outlined below:
 - works around Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station;
 - works around Clongriffin Station;
 - works around Malahide Station & Viaduct;
 - works to the existing user worked level crossing (XB001) south of Donabate; and
 - works around Drogheda MacBride Station.
- Modifications to existing depots at Drogheda and Fairview to support the new train fleet, including the provision of additional train stabling at Drogheda;
- Ancillary civils, utility diversions, drainage, and power work to cater for the changes.

A complete development description is set out in Schedule 1 of the RO package and illustrated in the Works Drawings (Works Layout Plan Nos. 1-23).



3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Overview

The Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 ('the 2001 Act') provides for the making of an RO application by CIÉ to An Bord Pleanála (the Board). There have been amendments to the 2001 Act since it was first enacted. Most recently, for example, the European Union (Railway Orders) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I.No. 743 of 2021) give further effect to the transposition of Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU ("the EIA Directive") by amending the 2001 Act.

An examination, analysis and evaluation is carried out by the Board in order to identify, describe and assess, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed railway works, including significant effects derived from the vulnerability of the activity to risks of major accidents and disasters relevant to it, on: population and human health; biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("the Habitats Directive") and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ("the Birds Directives"); land, soil, water, air and climate; material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape, and the interaction between the above factors. In carrying out an EIA in respect of an application made under section 37 of the 2001 Act, the Board is required, where appropriate, to co-ordinate the assessment with any assessment under the Habitats Directive or the Birds Directive.

The Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Ireland has given effect to the Habitats and Birds Directives through Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended).

An application for an RO is categorised as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) and CIÉ applies directly to the Board for permission. Railway works and the procedure for obtaining a RO is governed by the 2001 Act (as amended inter alia by Part 4 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006) and as amended by the S.I. 743 of 2021. The regulatory framework for Railway Orders is set out in Part 3 (Railway Orders) of the 2001 Act.

Following two phases of non-statutory public consultation, the RO application is prepared and submitted to the Board. Any person or body may make a submission or observation in writing to the Board in relation to the application and / or the EIAR. The RO application includes a number of technical documents and project drawings and an EIAR. All of these documents and drawings together with any feedback/submissions received from the public as part of the statutory public consultation process will be reviewed and considered by the Board before a decision on the application is made. The Board may, at its discretion, conduct an Oral Hearing before it makes a decision. At an Oral Hearing the authors of relevant reports and experts will comment on the submissions received and will be available for questioning.

3.2 Procedural Matters of the RO Application

In 2006, the Board assumed the role of the Minister for Transport where the granting of ROs is concerned. Subsequently, section 49 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 amended the 2001 Act, *inter alia*, by substituting new sections 37 to 47A for sections 37 to 47. These new sections were primarily intended to transfer responsibility for the approval of a RO from the Minister for Transport to the Board and to make certain related amendments. Further amendments were effected by S.I. No. 743 of 2021.

In general the Board has the power to *inter alia*:

- Receive an application for a Railway Order;
- Assess the application;
- Hold an Oral Hearing;
- Consider a range of matters before deciding whether to grant the order to which the application relates (section 43 of the 2001 Act as substituted and amended by S.I. 743 of 2021).
- After considering these matters, if the Board is of opinion that the application should be granted, it shall make an order authorising the construction of the works applied for, including improvement and the operation of the railway subject to such conditions, modifications, restrictions and requirements (and on such other terms) as the Board thinks proper and specifies in the order.

Section 43(2A) of the 2001 Act (as amended and substituted by the European Union (Railway Orders) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I.No. 743 of 2021) provides that an RO shall *inter alia* include:

- (a) the reasoned conclusion referred to in section 42B of the 2001 Act;
- (b) any environmental conditions, including conditions regarding monitoring measures, parameters to be monitored and the duration of monitoring, to which the authorisation is subject; and
- (c) a description of any features of the proposed railway works, or any measures envisaged, to avoid, prevent or reduce, or offset significant adverse effects on the environment.

A RO is therefore the statutory consent to an applicant providing authorisation to construct, maintain, improve and operate the railway or railway works. The 2001 Act sets out a bespoke process covering all aspects of consultation and notification requirements in relation to the application, consideration, assessment and decision-making for a proposed RO and if granted, for the construction, maintenance, improvement and operation of a railway and railway works, including powers of compulsory acquisition.

3.2.1 Requirements of Section 37 of the Act

Section 37 of the 2001 Act provides, *inter alia*, that a RO application is made in writing and accompanied by prescribed documentation. The application is required to be accompanied by an electronic version of each of the documents referred to in section 37(3) of the 2001 Act including the application itself.

Generally, the following documents are inter alia submitted as part of an application for a RO:

- Completed SID Application form;
- A draft of the proposed Railway Order;
- A plan of the proposed railway works;
- A book of reference to a plan describing the works which indicates the identity of the owners and of the occupiers of the lands described in the Plan;
- A statement of the likely effects on the environment of the proposed railway works (the EIAR); and
- An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and, if applicable, Natura Impact Statement.

Further, in accordance with the 2001 Act (as amended by S.I. No. 743/2021) “Environmental Impact Assessment” is defined in relation to the proposed railway works as meaning a process:

- (a) consisting of –
- (i) the preparation of an environmental impact assessment report by the applicant in accordance with section 39,
 - (ii) the carrying out of consultation required by or under this Part,
 - (iii) the examination by the Board of –
 - (I) the information presented in the environmental impact assessment report,
 - (II) any further information provided applicant under section 41, and, where applicable, section 47D and
 - (III) any relevant information received through consultation under section 40, section 41 and, where applicable, section 47D
 - (iv) the reaching of a reasoned conclusion by the Board in accordance with section 42B on the significant effects of the proposed railway works on the environment, taking into account the results of the examination referred to in subparagraph (iii) and, where appropriate, its own supplementary examination, and
 - (v) the integration by the Board of its reasoned conclusion into its decision under section 43

and,

- (b) including an examination, analysis and evaluation by the Board under sections 42B and 43 in order to identify, describe and assess, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects derived from the vulnerability of the activity to risks of major accidents and disasters relevant to it, on –
- (i) population and human health,
 - (ii) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009,
 - (iii) land, soil, water, air and climate,
 - (iv) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape, and
 - (v) the interaction between the factors mentioned in subparagraphs (i) to (iv);

3.2.2 Process Under Section 40 of the Act

Before an application is made for a Railway Order, section 40 of the 2001 Act (as amended *inter alia* by S.I. No. 743/2021) provides *inter alia* for the notification (including publishing in newspapers), depositing, serving (including on owners and occupiers) and making available for purchase (on payment of a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making copies or extracts) a copy of the draft RO and accompanying documentation and that same are available to be viewed electronically and at the places appointed by the Board under section 40(1)(a) of the 2001 Act.

The European Communities (Public Participation) Regulations 2010 (SI No. 352 of 2010) amended section 40(1)(b) of the 2001 Act by providing for the insertion after s.40(1)(b)(v) of a requirement stating that a person may only question the validity of a decision of the Board by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 84 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986) and identifying where practical information on the review mechanism can be found.

3.2.3 Decision

Section 42B of the 2001 Act as amended by S.I. No. 743/2021 provides for a “reasoned conclusion”. Whenever an application is made, and before deciding whether or not to grant an RO, the Board shall:

- (a) Duly take into account –
 - (i) The Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted under S.37 and any revised Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted under S.47 D;
 - (ii) Any additional information furnished to the Board under S.41 and where applicable any information submitted on foot of a notice under S.47 D (4);
 - (iii) Any submissions or observations made in relation to the likely significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates duly made to it under:
 - (I) Section 40(3) or 41(4) and not withdrawn;
 - (II) By an authority referred to in S.40(1)(c) or (e);
 - (III) On foot of a request under S.47 D(1) or a notice under S.47 D(6).
- (b) consider any other evidence that it has obtained under this Part in relation to the likely significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates, and
- (c) taking into account the results of the examination referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b), reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates.”

Therefore, prior to the Board making this decision it must take into account its “reasoned conclusion” and conclude that its “reasoned conclusion” is up to date and remains up to date. In those circumstances the Board can, if it is of the opinion that the application should be granted, make an order authorising CIÉ to construct, maintain, improve and operate the railway works specified in the order in such manner and subject to such conditions (including conditions regarding monitoring measures, parameters to be monitored and the duration of monitoring, modifications, restrictions and requirements) and such other terms as the Board thinks proper and specifies in the Railway Order. The “reasoned conclusion” is then integrated by the Board into its decision.

S.I. 743/2021 also amends the 2001 Act as follows:

- Section 43A defines “environmental condition” as “An environmental condition in relation to a Railway Order means any condition, modification, restriction or requirement to which a Railway Order is subject that relates to:
 - (ii) features of the railway works or measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects on the environment, or
 - (iii) the monitoring of significant adverse effects on the environment, (including conditions regarding monitoring measures, parameters to be monitored and the duration of monitoring)”.
- Section 43B of the deals with a duty to notify and comply with modification and conditions of the Railway Order approval.
- Section 43C provides that the Minister for Transport shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that a railway undertaking complies with “environmental conditions.”
- Section 43D gives the Minister for Transport power to request information regarding compliance with a modification or condition.
- Section 43E gives the Minister for Transport power to carry out an assessment of the railway undertakings compliance with an “environmental condition”.
- Section 43F provides the Minister for Transport with the power to direct action to ensure compliance with “environmental condition”.

3.3 Compulsory Purchase Order

When granted, a RO confers powers on CIÉ to allow for the acquisition of land and other rights in relation to land to facilitate the construction, maintenance, improvement and operation of the railway. For example, section 45(1) of the 2001 Act *inter alia* states:

“Upon the commencement of a railway order, the Agency or CIÉ shall thereupon be authorised to acquire compulsorily any land or rights in, under or over land or any substratum of land specified in the order and, for that purpose, the railway order shall have effect as if it were a compulsory purchase order...”

In accordance with section 37(2)(d) of the 2001 Act, a book of reference has been prepared (indicating the identity of the owners and of the occupiers of the lands described in the plan). The EIAR has also assessed the proposed railway works set out in the book of reference. The Planning Report does not duplicate these assessments. All reasonable efforts have been made to engage with all affected property owners throughout the design and EIAR process. Where engagement has been forthcoming, this has informed the design and the consultation aspect of the EIAR preparation process is documented as appropriate in the EIAR.

3.4 Requirement for EIA

In accordance with section 39 of the 2001 Act, the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (“EIAR”) for this Railway Order Application *inter alia* contains:

- (i) a description of the proposed railway works comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the proposed works;
- (ii) a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed railway works on the environment;

- (iii) the data required to identify and assess the main effects which the proposed railway works are likely to have on the environment;
- (iv) a description of any features of the proposed railway works, and of any measures envisaged to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
- (v) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by CIÉ which are relevant to the proposed railway works and their specific characteristics and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the railway works on the environment; and
- (vi) a summary in non-technical language of the above information.

The EIAR takes into account the available results of other relevant assessments under European Union or national legislation with a view to avoiding duplication of assessments. The assessments contained in the EIAR have also been co-ordinated with the assessment under the Habitats Directive) and the Birds Directive) as transposed in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the NIS which has been prepared for this Railway Order application.

The EIAR, in addition to addressing the matters set out in section 39(1) of the 2001 Act, contains information specified in Annex IV to the EIA Directive relevant to the specific characteristics of a particular railway works and type of railway works proposed and to the environmental features likely to be affected.

Section 42B of the 2001 Act includes provisions in relation to a “reasoned conclusion.” Accordingly, whenever an application is made under section 37, before deciding whether or not to grant a Railway Order An Bord Pleanála must take into account inter alia the following matters:

- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted under S.37 and any revised Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted under S.47 D;
- Any additional information furnished to the Board under S.41 and where applicable any information submitted on foot of a notice under S.47 D (4);
- Any submissions or observations made in relation to the likely significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates duly made to it under: section 40(3) or 41(4) and not withdrawn; by an authority referred to in S.40(1)(c) or (e); on foot of a request under S.47 D(1) or a notice under S.47 D(6);
- Consider any other evidence it has obtained under this Part in relation to the likely significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates, and
- Taking into account the results of the examination of matters referred to above and reach a reasonable conclusion on the significant effects on the environment of the activity to which the application relates.”

Prior to the Board making its decision it takes into account its “reasoned conclusion” under section 42B and concludes that it is up to date and remains up to date. The Board can, if it is of the opinion that the application should be granted, make an order authorising Córas Iompair Éireann to construct, maintain, improve and operate the railway works specified in the Railway Order in such manner and subject to such conditions (including environmental conditions and conditions regarding monitoring measures, parameters to be monitored and the duration of monitoring, modifications, restrictions and requirements) and such other terms as the Board thinks proper and specifies in the

Railway Order. Accordingly, section 43 of the 2001 Act has been amended to reflect the changes brought about by Statutory Instrument Number (S.I.) 743 of 2021.

The EIAR has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU Assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU¹ and includes the information set out in section 39 of the 2001 Act and has had regard to relevant guidelines and guidance documents as set out in paragraph 1.5.1. Article 5 and Annex IV to the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU sets out the information to be contained in an EIAR. The information provided in the EIAR meets these requirements.

Table 3-1 below includes the chapter reference where each of the information requirements is addressed in the EIAR.

Table 3-1 Annex IV Information Required by Art. 5.1 of the EIA Directive

Information for the EIAR as per Article 5(1)	Chapter in EIAR
<p>1. Description of the project, including in particular:</p> <p>(a) A description of the location of the project;</p> <p>(b) A description of the physical characteristics of the whole project, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases;</p> <p>(c) A description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the project (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used;</p> <p>(d) An estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation) and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases.</p>	Chapter 4 and Chapter 5
2. A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of project design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the Proposed Development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.	Chapter 3
3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the project as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge.	Chapters 6 - 24
4. A description of the factors specified in Article 3(1) likely to be significantly affected by the project: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape.	Chapter 6 – 24

¹ The European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018) inter alia transposed the Directive.

Information for the EIAR as per Article 5(1)	Chapter in EIAR
<p>5. A description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment resulting from, inter alia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The construction and existence of the project, including, where relevant, demolition works; (b) The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; (c) The emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste; (d) The risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); (e) The cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources; (f) The impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; (g) The technologies and the substances used. <p>The description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in Article 3(1) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at Union or Member State level which are relevant to the project.</p>	<p>Chapters 6 – 24, Chapter 25 and Chapter 26</p>
<p>6. A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved.</p>	<p>Chapters 6 – 24, Chapter 25 and Chapter 26</p>
<p>7. A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.</p>	<p>Chapters 6 – 24, Chapter 25, Chapter 26 and Chapter 27</p>
<p>8. A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the project on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Relevant information available and obtained through risk assessments pursuant to Union legislation such as Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council or Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom or relevant assessments carried out pursuant to national legislation may be used for this purpose provided that the requirements of this Directive are met. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies.</p>	<p>Chapter 24</p>
<p>9. A non-technical summary of the information provided under points 1 to 8.</p>	<p>Volume 1: Non-technical Summary</p>
<p>10. A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the report.</p>	<p>Volume 2: All chapters</p>

3.5 EIA Process

In accordance with the 2001 Act (as amended *inter alia* by S.I. No. 743/2021), “Environmental Impact Assessment” is defined in relation to the proposed railway works as meaning a process –

- (a) consisting of –
 - (i) the preparation of an environmental impact assessment report by the applicant in accordance with section 39,
 - (ii) the carrying out of consultation required by or under this Part,
 - (iii) the examination by the Board of –
 - (I) the information presented in the environmental impact assessment report,
 - (II) any further information provided applicant under section 41, and, where applicable, section 47D and
 - (III) any relevant information received through consultation under section 40, section 41 and, where applicable, section 47D
 - (iv) the reaching of a reasoned conclusion by the Board in accordance with section 42B on the significant effects of the proposed railway works on the environment, taking into account the results of the examination referred to in subparagraph (iii) and, where appropriate, its own supplementary examination, and
 - (v) the integration by the Board of its reasoned conclusion into its decision under section 43

and,

- (b) including an examination, analysis and evaluation by the Board under sections 42B and 43 in order to identify, describe and assess, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects derived from the vulnerability of the activity to risks of major accidents and disasters relevant to it, on –
 - (i) population and human health,
 - (ii) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009,
 - (iii) land, soil, water, air and climate,
 - (iv) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape, and
 - (v) the interaction between the factors mentioned in subparagraphs (i) to (iv);

EIA is, therefore, the process under the terms of European Directives for the assessment of the effects of development projects on the environment. An EIAR is a statement prepared by the developer, providing information on the significant effects on the environment based on current knowledge and methods of assessment. It is carried out by competent experts, with appropriate expertise to provide informed assessment on the environmental factors as required under the EIA Directive. The EIAR consists of a systematic analysis and assessment of the potential effects of a Proposed Development on the receiving environment.

Environmental impact assessment is defined in Article 1 of the EIA Directive to mean a process consisting of:

- i. The preparation of an EIAR by the developer, as referred to in Article 5(1) and (2);
- ii. The carrying out of consultations as referred to in Article 6 and, where relevant, Article 7;

The Directive requires that management plans be prepared on a river basin basis and specifies a structured method for developing these plans.

Any works which could affect the biological, physiochemical or hydromorphological quality of a waterbody requires an assessment in line with the WFD to demonstrate how the proposed works will not lead to a degradation in status and where possible, enhance waterbody status in order to achieve the required 'Good' status target as set out in the directive. The likely impacts to various hydrological and hydrogeological parameters and how these affect WFD status are assessed in the EIAR, in Chapters 10 (Water) and Chapter 11 (Hydrogeology).

3.8 Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment

A separate Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) has been undertaken and has informed the design stage and the environmental assessment. All potential sources of flooding have been considered, including fluvial, coastal, pluvial, groundwater and surface water drainage derived flooding.

The SSFRA has been prepared in accordance with *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* published by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2009. The Guidelines set out a staged approach to the assessment of flood risk with each stage carried out only as needed. The stages are listed below:

- **Stage I Flood Risk Identification** – to identify whether there may be any flooding or surface water management issues.
- **Stage II Initial Flood Risk Assessment** – to confirm sources of flooding that may affect an area or Proposed Development, to appraise the adequacy of existing information and to scope the extent of the risk of flooding which may involve preparing indicative flood zone maps.
- **Stage III Detailed Flood Risk Assessment** – to assess flood risk issues in sufficient detail and to provide a quantitative appraisal of potential flood risk to a proposed or existing development or land to be zoned, of its potential impact on flood risk elsewhere and of the effectiveness of any proposed mitigation measures.

The SSFRA is a separate supporting report to the RO application.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Introduction

Consultation during the design and environmental impact assessment process is a key element as part of any project. This section of the Planning Report provides an overview of the statutory, non-statutory and public consultations that have informed the design and environmental assessments.

The main consultation stages as part of the project development included the following:

- Pre-application consultation with an Bord Pleanála (January 2022 – February 2024).
- Consultation on the Emerging Preferred Option - Non-statutory public consultation no. 1 ('PC1' - 24th February 2022 to 08th April 2022).
- Non-Statutory Informal EIA Scoping Report (see section 4.3 below).
- Consultation on the Preferred Option - Non-statutory public consultation no. 2 ('PC2' - 9th of May 2023 to 23rd June 2023).
- Statutory consultation as part of the EIA / Railway Order application process.

As well as these consultations above there have been a number of meetings with relevant Local Authorities, National Transport Authority (NTA), Emergency Services, Uisce Éireann, ESB, landowners, private individuals, residents' associations, etc., all of which has informed the project. The main stages and bodies consulted are discussed in the sections below.

4.2 Pre-Application Consultation

Pre-application consultation (PAC) must be requested before an application for permission or approval is made for a Railway Order (RO) to An Bord Pleanála. 5 no. pre-application consultation meetings have been held with An Bord Pleanála in advance of the RO application being lodged. The dates of the meetings and topics discussed are outlined below:

Table 4-1 Overview of pre-application discussions with An Bord Pleanála

PAC No.	Date	Agenda
PAC No. 1	2022.01.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Iarnród Éireann; • DART+ Programme; • DART+ Coastal North Project Description; • DART+ Coastal North Option Selection Process; • DART+ Coastal North Project Phases/Programme; • DART+ Coastal North Engagement and Proposed Schedule of PAC Meetings; • DART+ Coastal North Conclusions; • Questions & AOB.
PAC No. 2	2022.03.09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of PC1; • Key Interventions – Initial Feedback received; • Planning Context Overview; • EIAR Overview; • AA overview; • Interdependencies between DART+ projects; • Programme Update; • Questions & AOB.

PAC No. 3	2023.04.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Update; • PC1 Feedback and Design Development; • Presentation of Preferred Option; • BEMU Update; • Consultation Update; • RO Update; • Programme Update; • Future Meetings; • Questions & AOB.
PAC No. 4	2023.06.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Update; • Consultation Update inc. feedback from PC2; • Construction Strategy; • AA & Biodiversity; • EIA Update – focus on LVIA, Climate Change, Traffic & Transportation and Noise Impacts; • Approach to Cumulative Assessment; • Programme Update; • Questions & AOB.
PAC No. 5	2023.10.16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Update • Design Update • EIAR and AA Update • Railway Order Approach & Requirements • Property/Residential Amenity • Presentation of final RO package (notices, logistics, sequencing etc) • Programme Update • Questions & AOB.

4.3 Informal EIA Scoping

‘Scoping’ is a process of deciding what information should be contained in an EIAR and what methods should be used to gather and assess that information. The EIA Scoping Report set out in Volume 4 - Appendix A1.2 of the EIAR accompanying this RO application describes the nature, extent and location of the proposed project. The scoping stage provides an opportunity to consult with statutory consultees and stakeholders about the extent of the information required to be contained within the EIAR.

An EIA Scoping report was prepared on the DART+ Coastal North project and sent to prescribed bodies and key stakeholders on the 6th March 2023, as part of an informal EIA scoping consultation process. The key objectives of the EIA Scoping Report were to:

- Provide a description of the Proposed Development;
- Identify likely significant impacts which may arise during construction and operation of the Proposed Development that will be assessed in the EIAR;
- Outline proposed assessment methodologies for completing the assessments;
- Outline the likely contents of the EIAR; and
- Form a basis of common reference for consultation about the scope and methodology for the EIAR.

On the basis of the information provided in the EIA Scoping Report views were sought on the scope and level of detail that should be considered when preparing the EIAR, including any additional environmental issues or alternative methodologies that should be taken into consideration. The prescribed bodies and key stakeholders were invited to comment over a 6-week period. The submissions received have been considered as part of the preparation of the EIAR, as appropriate.

An EIA Scoping Response Report has been prepared to document the process undertaken and is included in Volume 4 Appendix A1.2 of the EIAR accompanying this RO application. This report details the list of prescribed bodies and key stakeholders that were invited to comment, feedback received and how the feedback has been considered by the project team as part of the preparation of the EIAR.

4.4 Public Consultation

There have been a number of non-statutory public consultation campaigns which have provided the opportunity for the public and statutory bodies to engage and provide feedback that informed the design development and ultimately the final RO proposals.

A non-technical Public Consultation Brochure presenting the key details of the DART+ Coastal North project, the benefits, the option selection process, the Emerging Preferred Option, maps, and drawings, were developed and published in both the Irish and English languages for each public consultation event. The brochures were made available on the dedicated project webpage and hard copies were issued to elected representatives following the Public Consultation No.1 & No.2 launches.

An information leaflet was distributed via mail drop during the opening week of the consultation periods. The mail drops targeted areas within 100m of the railway line, and extended areas surrounding those project areas where interventions are proposed.

Both print and social media advertising campaigns were conducted to ensure widespread notification of the Public Consultations.

Letters were issued to all statutory authorities and impacted landowners in advance of the public consultations.

4.4.1 Public Consultation No. 1: The Emerging Preferred Option

In order to provide an opportunity for potential users of the services, those likely to be affected by its development and all members of the general public, to express their views on the project plans at an early stage in the design process, the DART + Coastal North project conducted a public consultation event, on the **Emerging Preferred Option**, referred to as Public Consultation No. 1. This event commenced on 24th February 2022 and concluded on 8th April 2022.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of PC1, in-person public consultation events were not possible. Five online public webinars were held during Public Consultation No. 1 as well as briefings to the four relevant Local Authorities and their Public Representatives. The purpose of the webinars was to answer any questions the public had on the project to assist them in writing a formal submission.

4.4.3 Summary of Main Issues Raised

A clear divide existed within the submissions received as part of both PC1 and PC2. Those submissions received from respondents from the Howth Peninsula, in general, opposed the DART+ Coastal North project while submissions relevant to the extension of services to Drogheda, in general, supported the project proposals.

Operational Phase – Significant volumes of submissions raised objections to the proposed DART shuttle service proposed to enable DART frequency on the Northern Line to be maximised. Many of these submissions centered their objections around the need to interchange at Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station, a loss of direct services to Dublin City Centre from the Howth Peninsula during peak periods, and the knock-on effects on the surrounding road network associated with increased level crossing closure times.

Submissions raised concerns relating to a lack of clarity around journey times and potential negative impacts on the existing Enterprise Service.

Submissions also noted some support for the increase in DART frequency and capacity, however this support centered around submissions received from communities surrounding the Northern Line and not the Howth Branch.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the lack of toilets on board DART's.

Stations – Submissions called for significant upgrades to station facilities in general and a particular emphasis was placed on Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station which will serve as an interchange station as part of DART+ Coastal North proposals. Items including security, anti-social behavior, access & mobility, a lack of toilets, poor lighting, poor shelter, poor signage, and a lack of station staffing were highlighted in many submissions received.

Submissions also called for new stations to be included as part of the DART+ Coastal North project.

Environmental Impact Assessment - Submissions stated the need for 'sufficient environmental assessment and monitoring studies to be carried out in any designated environmentally sensitive areas. Submissions also called for further traffic assessment and modelling relating to the Howth Branch Level Crossing proposals. The need for the effects on those with health and/or mobility issues, the elderly, local businesses, tourism, and cyclists/pedestrians to be given greater consideration was also common across submissions received.

Many respondents noted the fact that they may opt in future for private car use because of the proposals to require an interchange at Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station in place of the direct service currently offered on the Howth Branch.

Project Need – Some stakeholders recognised the need for the proposed project, and welcomed the proposed frequency and capacity increases as well as the benefits of extending the electrification to Drogheda. Submissions highlighted that the proposals would reduce overcrowding, improve reliability, and would contribute to the development of public transport within the GDA.

Others opposed the proposals, citing the DART+ Coastal North project as resulting in a significant downgrade in service level for passengers commuting to/from Howth compared with the current situation.

Project Scope – Submissions noted that the scope of DART+ Coastal North is overly limited and called for the project to include connections to Dublin Airport, Drogheda North, Dundalk, and Navan for example. Respondents called for interventions at level crossings on the Howth Branch as well as sections of additional track between Howth Junction & Donaghmede and Dublin City Centre to improve efficiencies of rail transit.

Public Realm - Submissions referred to the public realm surrounding the proposed railway line and stations noting that the delivery of a high-quality public realm needs to be a central focus of the scheme, particularly around any station entrances.

Climate Change - It was noted that developments such as the DART+ Coastal North project are essential to Ireland achieving its binding climate action targets.

Negative effects such as increased queuing at level crossings resulting from increased DART frequencies was also noted as a significant concern as well as the proposed interchange at Howth Junction & Donaghmede station potentially resulting in many current DART users opting to revert to private car use in future.

Landownership - Submissions queried the impact that the proposed works will have on their land and properties, including potential permanent or temporary impacts. Submissions also questioned what legal agreements / consents would be required to include land not owned by IÉ (such as residential), in the RO application.

Safety – Significant concerns were raised in relation to security at Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station where people cited anti-social behavior as a main reason for opposing the Howth Shuttle. Respondents noted that pedestrian and cyclist safety must be considered in relation to extended level crossing closures. Feedback also highlighted that emergency vehicle access needs to be considered by the design team.

Communications and Public Consultation - Submissions noted that ongoing consultation and meetings with community representatives and elected representatives is essential to ensure 'buy-in' to these plans and minimize disruption to the surrounding communities.

Structures – Respondents from the Drogheda area noted concerns relating to the works proposed to bridges around Drogheda MacBride Station. Issues raised included lack of active travel provision, potential for Railway Terrace to be used as a connection to lands subject to development, and associated disruption relating to construction activities.

Construction – Submissions received outlined concerns regarding the impacts of construction and clarity was sought on the mitigations that will be put in place. In addition to the references to construction impacts and mitigations, stakeholders submitted their views on the impact of noise and vibration during construction and the impact it will have on traffic in the areas surrounding the proposed works.

Electrification – Many respondents voiced support for the electrification of the Northern Line. Some submissions noted that the electrification should continue beyond the current proposed extents. Other respondents queried if electrification of the line to Drogheda is necessary.

Some respondents raised concerns in relation to landscaping around the proposed substations and concerns relating to noise and light pollution associated with substation.

Planning & Policy – Submissions raised concerns in relation to how planned developments have been considered in the development of DART+ Coastal North.

Respondents noted the opportunity to include new stations as part of DART+ Coastal North as opportunities missed.

Concerns over joined up thinking were raised in relation to interaction between DART+ Coastal North and other active travel schemes as well as noting a need for better connecting bus services.

4.5 Further Public Consultation Following PC2

After PC2 ended, and throughout 2023, ongoing consultation and engagement was carried out by IÉ and the Arup consultancy team undertaking the scheme design and environmental assessment. This included additional pro-active measures to engage with landowners/occupiers who would be affected by the project. There was a particular focus on areas where permanent and temporary acquisition of land would be included in the RO application. Consultations also continued with other individuals and groups who shared an interest in the Proposed Development, to ensure all views and opinions were heard and feedback duly considered by the project team (e.g. Howth Sutton Community Council and Donaghmede Estate Residents Association). The engagement included issuing letters and emails, inviting and encouraging interested parties to make contact to schedule a meeting with the project team, holding meetings with property owners to brief them on technical and procedural aspects of the RO application, operating a dedicated telephone line to take calls from the public, responding to enquiries and emails, and briefing local Elected Representatives. The PC2 Findings Report summarises the activities carried out and the feedback from this process up until November 2023. IÉ will continue this open and constructive approach to engagement throughout the RO application period.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This section presents a summary of the policy context at international, European, national, regional and local level for the DART+ Coastal North project. The planning and policy documents discussed in the following sections are listed in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Planning and Policy Documents

International Policy
United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015)
European Policy
EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system
Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)
Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy
European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019
National Policy
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
National Development Plan 2021-2030
National Sustainable Mobility Policy
National Investment Framework for Transport Planning in Ireland 2021
Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2023-2025
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
Climate Action Plan 2024
The White Paper, Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030
Regional Policy
Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031
Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024
Local Policy
Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029
Baldoyle-Stapolin Local Area Plan 2013 (recently expired)
Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013 (recently expired)
Donabate Local Area Plan 2016 (extended to March 2026)
Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

5.1 International policy

5.1.1 United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015)

In September 2015, Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN). The 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. This framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.



Figure 5-1 Sustainable Development Goals, Source: un.org

Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11 are the most directly relevant to the Proposed Development:

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Target 9.1: *Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.*

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Target 11.2: *By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.*

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project (Proposed Development) is supported by the goals and targets set out in the relevant SDGs. It will enable more efficient, safe and integrated sustainable transport movement. In Ireland, the SDGs are being implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2022-2024, which is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda. It provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 SDGs.

5.2 European policy

5.2.1 EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system

In 2011, the European Commission adopted the White Paper Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system in the context of the Union's 2020 growth strategy. The vision of the White Paper spans four decades, up to 2050, but also sets earlier goals for 2020 and 2030. The Commission's vision for a competitive and sustainable transport system involves transport that uses cleaner energy, better exploitation of modern infrastructure and a reduction in its negative impact on the environment.

The White Paper defines ten goals designed to guide actions and measure progress to achieve a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions and comparable reduction in oil dependency. Goals to which the DART+ Programme is aligned:

Goal 1: Halve the use of 'conventionally fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂ free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030.

Goal 4: By 2050, complete a European high-speed rail network. Triple the length of the existing highspeed rail network by 2030 and maintain a dense railway network in all Member States. By 2050 the majority of medium-distance passenger transport should go by rail.

The proposed DART+ Coastal North project supports the goals of the EU White Paper to improve resource efficiency of the transport system by electrifying the Malahide to Drogheda rail lines. The proposed DART+ Coastal North project will also enable the increase in frequency and capacity of rail services which will increase competitiveness of the rail network as a mode of travel within urban, and inter-urban areas.

5.2.2 Trans-European Transport Network

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is a European Union policy directed towards the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and rail-road terminals. The network consists of two layers:

- **The Comprehensive Network:** Covering all EU regions.
- **The Core Network:** A subset of the Comprehensive Network. This consists of the strategically most important connections, linking the most important nodes.

The objective of TEN-T is to close gaps, remove bottlenecks and eliminate technical barriers that exist between transport networks of EU Member States, strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contributing to the creation of a single European transport area. Under Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU “the TEN-T Regulation”) the Core Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2030, while the Comprehensive Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2050.

The aim of the EU’s Transport Policy is to promote a mobility that is efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly. Congestion is not just a nuisance for road users, it also results in an enormous waste of fuel and reduces productivity. Many manufacturing processes depend on just-in-time deliveries and free flow transport for efficient production. Congestion costs the EU economy more than 1% of GDP – in other words, more than the EU budget. To reduce this, the EU needs more efficient transport and logistics, better infrastructure and the ability to optimise capacity use. The EU Commission also recognises that Europe needs transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil. Moving towards low-carbon and more energy efficient transport, as well as developing more efficient urban and intermodal transport solutions are essential alternatives to developing a more environmentally friendly transport policy.

The TEN-T Regulation sets out the requirements for rail infrastructure that form part of the TEN-T infrastructure network, both Core (2030) and Comprehensive (2050), and states under Article 12(2)(d), the following:

“Member States shall ensure that the railway infrastructure:

(d) save in the case of isolated networks, is fully electrified as regards line tracks and, to the extent necessary for electric train operations, as regards sidings;”

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project is consistent with the objectives of the Trans-European Transport Network. It will involve the creation of a rail mode transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil, and more energy efficient. It will allow for more efficient transportation along the east coast of Ireland, and encourage greater use of public transportation, reducing the dependency on car-based commuting.

5.2.3 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (European Commission 2020) sets out a number of goals as to how people will move within and between cities in the future. It has identified 82 initiatives which have been categorised into 10 ‘flagships’.

The flagship relevant to the DART+ Coastal North project is ‘*Flagship 3 – Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy - for instance by doubling high-speed rail traffic and developing extra cycling infrastructure over the next 10 years.*’

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this strategy as it ensures sustainable alignment in urban areas for planned growth with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services.

5.2.4 European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

The EU Green Deal (European Commission 2019) sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment. It commits the EU to become climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction of between 50 to 55% by 2030 when compared to 1990 levels. By focusing on transport, buildings, and energy, the EGD is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

A key component of the EU's Green Deal roadmap to transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future is 'accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility'. It seeks to reduce the transport sectors greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this policy, in particular by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions produced by transport through the transition away from private cars to more sustainable public transport options.

5.3 National policy

5.3.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country by 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities to protect and enhance the environment.



Figure 5-2 National Strategic Outcomes, Source: Project Ireland 2040

There are 10 “National Strategic Outcomes” several of which are relevant to the Proposed Development (see Figure 5-2):

“Compact Growth

Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will, by providing a more efficient public transport infrastructure, make urban areas and zoned lands along the route, more attractive areas in which to live and work in.

“Sustainable Mobility

In line with Ireland’s Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and the introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.”

The DART+ Coastal North project is entirely consistent with this Strategic Outcome in terms of the provision of the electrification of part of a busy public transportation route along the east coast of Ireland.

“Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society:

The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage less car-based travel and will comply with the objective to reduce carbon emissions in the country.

One of the key growth enablers for the Dublin Region is identified as:

“Delivering the key rail projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the GDA including Metro Link, DART expansion and the Luas green line link to Metro Link.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to the achievement of these outcomes and objectives. As outlined above, it will lead to more compact, railway-based growth along the railway line. It will encourage more sustainable commuting and contribute to a lower carbon environment. It will enhance the growth of the GDA in a more sustainable approach than one based on car transport. It is likely to alleviate pressure on Dublin City and create additional areas in the GDA along the route in which people can live and work.

5.3.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

The current National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the ten-year capital investment ceilings which will support economic, social, environmental and cultural development across Ireland, incorporating a total public investment of €165 billion from 2021-2030. It takes account of the Covid-19 crisis and related recovery plans, to ensure alignment with the new Programme for Government, to strengthen the alignment with the NPF and to enhance the link with the new Climate Action Plan and other sectoral policies.

To deliver the National Strategic Outcomes set out in the NPF, the NDP identifies the following relevant Strategic Investment Priorities and actions. Note that ‘DART+ Expansion Programme’ refers to the DART+ Programme.

Table 5-2 NDP Strategic Investment Priorities and actions

National Planning Framework NSO	NDP Strategic Investment Priority	NDP reference to DART+ Programme
NSO 2: Enhanced Regional Accessibility	Public Transport	“Investment in the DART+ programme will address some of the constraints on the Dublin City Centre rail network and provide for additional services for intercity rail services.”
NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility	DART+ Programme	“The DART+ programme will be a cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Irish rail network.”
NSO 8: Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society	An additional 500,000 sustainable mobility journeys per day by 2030. Comprehensive integrated public transport network for Ireland’s cities connecting more people to more places.	“Delivering priority public transport programmes including BusConnects, DART+ Expansion Programme and MetroLink so that increased transport demand is met by greener public transport.”

Strategic Investment Priorities have been influenced by the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy and society. As identified above, the DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to achieving these objectives.

5.3.3 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The Department of Transport's National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP) sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade, targeting at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.

The NSMP has been developed to align with and complement other international, European and national policies and frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement, European Green Deal, EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and National Planning Framework.

The policy is guided by three key principles, which are underpinned by 10 high level goals as detailed in Table 5-3 below.

Table 5-3 NSMP Principles and Goals

Principles	Goals
Safe and Green Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve mobility safety 2. Decarbonise public transport 3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas. 4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas. 5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car
People Focused Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all. 7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model. 8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement
Better Integrated Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels. 10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.

The DART+ Programme is highlighted within the NSMP as being an important element for supporting Safe and Green Mobility. A key focus is the expansion of electrification and additional electric and battery-electric fleet for services to Drogheda.

The DART+ Coastal North project is in compliance with the NSMP and supports the goals through expansion of the electrified network to Drogheda. The DART+ Coastal North project will decarbonise public transport, promote the use of and expand the availability of sustainable mobility.

5.3.4 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (December 2021)

The Department of Transport has prepared and finalised the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI). NIFTI is the Department of Transport's high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport. It represents the Department's contribution to Project Ireland 2040, Government's long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more sustainable future.

NIFTI has been developed to ensure sectoral investment is aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and supports the delivery of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

As part of NIFTI, a wide range of supporting analysis has been conducted to identify key transport challenges, needs and constraints, both today and in the future. This analysis can be divided into three broad categories: context and background, the existing land transport network, and the future land transport network.

The NIFTI states:

“The right transport investment helps to deliver high-quality travel and supports positive outcomes for society, the environment and the economy. However, these outcomes do not happen by chance. It is important to have in place a framework to guide transport investment and deliver the infrastructure and services we need. That is the purpose of NIFTI.

New transport investments will have to demonstrate their alignment with NIFTI. By extension, this will ensure that investment is aligned with the NPF and its National Strategic Outcomes, resulting in a consistent approach to investment across Government, with transport supporting our growth and development goals. In this way, NIFTI will ensure that transport enables the NPF.”

The NIFTI notes that the NDP identifies DART+ as one of the infrastructure projects required in the next decade.

In order to address the challenges identified in the supporting analysis, NIFTI establishes four Investment Priorities: Decarbonisation, Protection and Renewal, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, and Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity. Future transport projects must align with these priorities to be considered for funding. Moreover, as the National Strategic Outcomes are embedded in NIFTI, future investment made in accordance with the priorities will support the delivery of the National Planning Framework over the coming decades.

The DART + Coastal North project will comply with the Investment Priorities. It will assist in the decarbonisation of the transport system. It will help in the protection of the environment. It will improve the mobility of people in a sustainable manner. Finally, it will improve regional connectivity between Dublin, Meath and Louth counties.

5.3.5 Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

This Statement of Strategy is the Department of Transport's primary strategic plan and sets out key priorities for the period 2023- 2025. The high-level goals of the Department are:

- Connectivity
- Sustainability: Economy, Environment and Society
- Safety, Security and Accessibility
- Effective Regulation
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Organisational Excellence and Innovation

The Statement of Strategy specifically identifies the DART+ Coastal North project as a key strategic project for delivering “Strategic Goal 2: Sustainability: Economy, Environment and Society”:

“Ensuring that our transport system is integrated, resilient and decarbonised in a manner that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable:

We will... Accelerate modal shift to public transport, improving the transport choices available to people

By... Continued progression of BusConnects, DART+ and MetroLink programmes”

5.3.6 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (Government of Ireland 2021) sets out the central objective relating to emission reductions. It legally binds Ireland to have net-zero emissions no later than 2050 and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of the decade (2030), against a base of 2018 emissions. The Act sets out the following:

‘The first two carbon budgets proposed by the Advisory Council shall provide for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions such that the total amount of annual greenhouse gas emissions in the year ending on 31 December 2030 is 51 per cent less than the annual greenhouse gas emissions reported for the year ending on 31 December 2018, as set out in the national greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by the Agency.’

The DART+ Coastal North project would deliver infrastructure which will support a shift towards sustainable transport options that will in turn support the targets set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

5.3.7 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019. A draft of the Plan was agreed by the Government in December 2023 and, following the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and a six-week public consultation, the finalised version of the CAP24 was approved by the Government on 21 May 2024. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government.

The Plan sets out a detailed sectoral roadmap designed to deliver a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. CAP24 builds upon the previous CAP23 targets by outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development. To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 the Plan sets out a number of targets and measures, several of which are relevant to enabling increase sustainable transport behaviours:

“Prioritise and accelerate delivery of NTA Connecting Ireland and new town services, via demand responsive transport pilot initiatives, conventional and nonconventional modes of public transport services.”

“Expansion of electrified rail service”

“Review financial and taxation incentives to further the transition of energy efficient vehicle fleets, considering actions to support and deliver a just and equitable EV transition”

CAP24 places more focus on high impact actions. A new Annex of Actions within CAP 24 includes the following high impact action with specific relevance to DART+ Coastal North:

TR/24/12(TF) Advance DART+ Programme - *Progressing appraisal and planning for DART+ Programme, including lodgement of railway order for DART+ Coastal North.*

The DART+ Coastal North project will be in compliance with, and will contribute towards, the targets identified in the Climate Action Plan. It will help reduce GHG emissions by:

- The provision of a more efficient public transport route, thereby encouraging a modal shift towards public transportation; and
- It will become part of the electrified rail network in Ireland.

The DART+ Coastal North project is part of the DART+ Programme which is identified as a specific action in the plan.

5.3.8 The White Paper, Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The White Paper; Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 is a statement of Government policy in the energy sector. It sets out an energy policy framework up to 2030 and outlines a transition to a low carbon energy system for Ireland by 2050. The White Paper comprises of an energy policy update and provides the framework to guide national policy. The Paper considers European and International climate change objectives and agreements. The actions that support the Proposed Development are, inter alia:

“To support energy efficient and renewable transport, we will: ...

- *...support transport modal shift through better alignment of land use and transport planning and a continuation of smarter travel programmes administered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport....*
- *...support the introduction of a suite of initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the rail network...*
- *...support further rail electrification...”*

The DART+ Coastal North project will support and facilitate the shift to support energy efficient and renewable transport through encouraging modal shift towards lower energy intensive public transport, to support Ireland’s climate ambitions and increase resilience to future climate change.

5.4 Regional policy

5.4.1 Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region.

The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.

The RSES sets out sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes, three of which are relevant to the DART + Coastal North project:

“Sustainable Settlement Patterns

Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in the development of urban settlements along the Northern Line rail network, and also Drogheda as a destination in which to live and work in.

“Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region’s citizens. (NSO 1)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage the development of underutilised zoned lands along the Northern Line rail network via provision of a more efficient public transport route.

“Integrated Transport and Land Use

Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in achieving a more balanced approach to the integration of transportation and development, both in terms of employment and residential locations. It will make locations along the Northern Line rail network more favourable for both employers and residents.

The ‘DART Expansion’ – the previous name for the DART+ Programme - is heavily referenced and supported in the document, including in relation to the development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and Drogheda.

Regional Policy Objective 5.2 states:

“Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, BusConnects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network and

ensure that future development maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, existing and planned.”

Regional Policy Objective 8.8: supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

One of the projects set out in Table 8.2 is:

“DART Expansion Programme – new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda or further north on the Northern Line, Celbridge – Hazelhatch or further south on the Kildare Line, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line, while continuing to provide DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones.”



Figure 5-3 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, Source: Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031²

² Note that the of DART+ Coastal North project is part of the north-south corridor indicated in blue on this graphic

5.4.2 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042, developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2021 was published in January 2023 and replaces the previous framework, titled the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016- 2035, which was approved by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2016. The Strategy addresses the transportation requirements to support the continued co-ordinated development within the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. Major projects provided for in the Strategy include:

- Luas Cross City.
- The reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel Rail Line.
- The on-going roll out of cycle tracks and greenways.
- Metrolink;
- DART+ Programme.
- Investment in bus priority and bus service improvements – BusConnects Dublin.
- M7 Naas to Newbridge widening, Osberstown Interchange and Sallins Bypass.

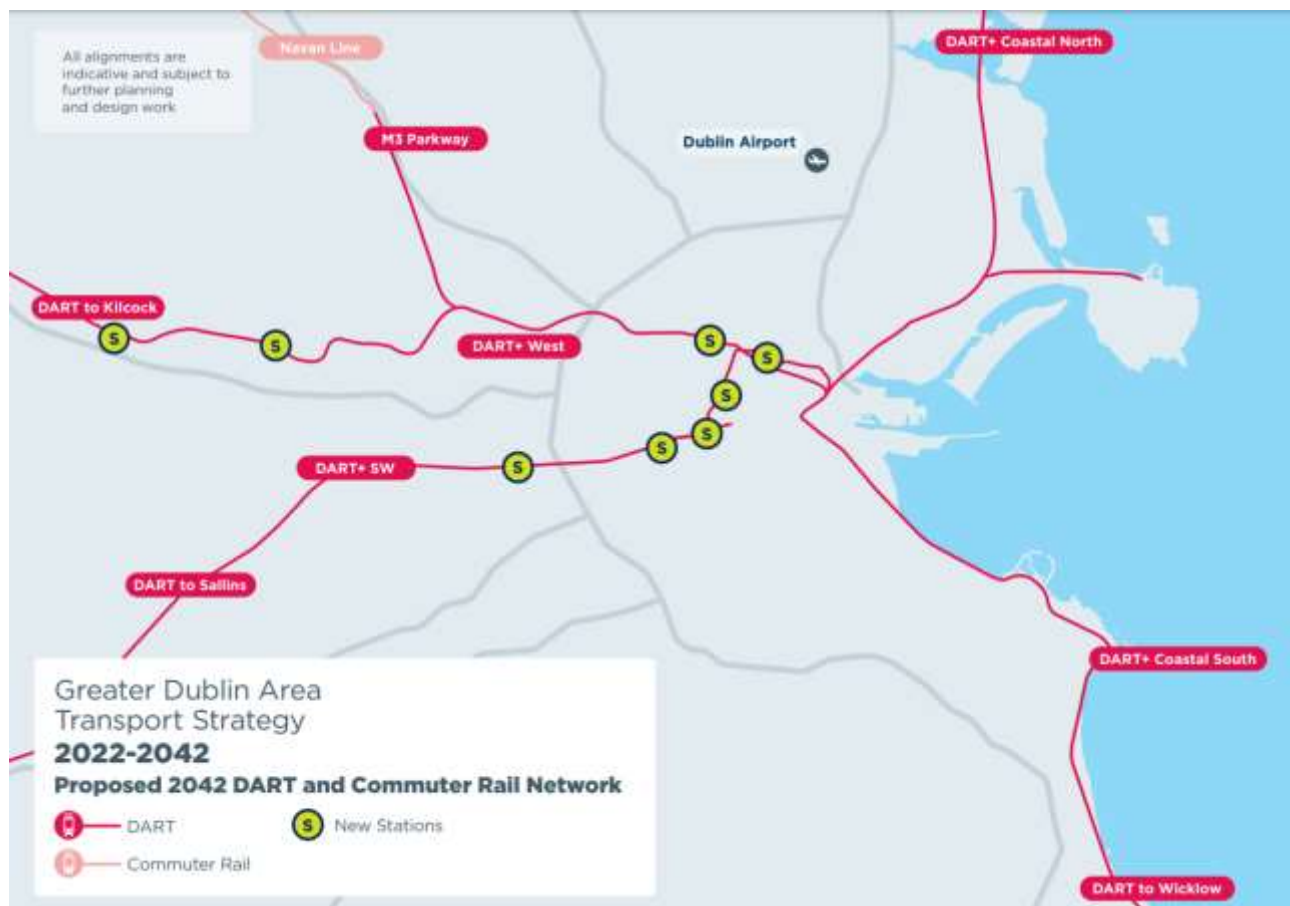


Figure 5-4 Proposed 2042 DART and Commuter Rail Network, Source: Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

With regards to the DART+ Programme, the Strategy includes the following measures:

“Measure RAIL1 – DART+ The DART+ Programme will be implemented, providing electrified services to Drogheda in the north and Maynooth plus Celbridge in the west, in addition to an

enhanced level of service to Greystones. The programme will include additional fleet, aligned with higher passenger demand, and a higher frequency of service on all lines.

Measure RAIL – Regional and Intercity Services *The NTA will continue to work with Irish Rail to improve regional and intercity services which will benefit connectivity within and to the GDA.*

Measure RAIL7 – Station Upgrades *The NTA, in conjunction with Irish Rail, will upgrade, refurbish and maintain train stations across the GDA to ensure that they are of an appropriate standard and provide a good quality experience for passengers.*

The DART+ Coastal North project is in accordance with all objectives of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and will support the achievement of various measures including those identified above.

5.4.3 Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024

Following the approval of a transport strategy for the region by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport an integrated implementation plan is prepared, covering a six-year period. The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 was approved in February 2016. The preparation of the Integrated Implementation Plan was aligned with the Government's review of capital spending which commenced in 2016 and culminated with the publication of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 in February 2018.

The NTA's Integrated Implementation Plan (IIP) 2019-2024 supports the delivery of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and is aligned with the objectives of the NDP (both now updated). It sets out the central infrastructure investment programme and overall funding provision over the six-year period. It identifies the key investment areas with respect to bus, light rail, heavy rail and integration and sustainable transport investment.

The IIP provides further detail on the sequencing and allocation of the €4.6bn available to the NTA across Bus, Light Rail, Metro and Heavy Rail projects up to 2024. It also notes that the...

"integrated rail network will provide a core, high-capacity transit system for the region and will deliver a very substantial increase in peak-hour capacity on all lines from Drogheda, Maynooth, Celbridge/Hazelhatch and Greystones".

The objectives for rail investment in the IIP are to:

- Implement key elements of the DART+ Programme.
- Eliminate the current signalling restrictions in the city centre through the completion of the City Centre Re-signalling project.
- Protect the safety and reliability of the GDA railway system through investment in upgrading of train control and monitoring systems.
- Continue investment in a level crossing closure programme.
- Enhance customer information systems and ticketing systems.
- Continue the upgrading and enhancement, including accessibility, of train stations in the GDA.

The investment programme and overall funding provision of the Implementation Plan align with and support the DART+ Coastal North project, particularly in implementing the DART+ Programme, and improving safety and reliability.

5.5 Local policy

5.5.1 Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

The Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted by Dublin City Council on 2nd December 2022 and came in to effect on 14th December 2022. The Plan sets out how the city will develop to meet the needs of all residents, workers and visitors. The policies and objectives:

- Guide growth and development,
- Provide a strategy to achieve proper planning, and
- Show how sustainable development will be achieved, meeting our needs now without compromise to future generations needs.

The main policies and objectives relevant to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

Policy QHSN11: 15-Minute City *To promote the realisation of the 15-minute city which provides for liveable, sustainable urban neighbourhoods and villages throughout the city that deliver healthy placemaking, high quality housing and well designed, intergenerational and accessible, safe and inclusive public spaces served by local services, amenities, sports facilities and sustainable modes of public and accessible transport where feasible.*

Policy QHSN12: Neighbourhood Development *To encourage neighbourhood development which protects and enhances the quality of our built environment and supports public health and community wellbeing. Promote developments which:*

- Encourage sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes and 'walkable communities' whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance;

Policy SMT1: Modal Shift and Compact Growth *To continue to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as active mobility and public transport, and to work with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other transport agencies in progressing an integrated set of transport objectives to achieve compact growth.*

Objective SMT01: Transition to More Sustainable Travel Modes *To achieve and monitor a transition to more sustainable travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport over the lifetime of the development plan, in line with the city mode share targets of 26% walking/cycling/micro mobility; 57% public transport (bus/rail/LUAS); and 17% private (car/ van/HGV/motorcycle).*

Policy SMT13: Urban Villages and the 15-Minute City *To support the role of the urban villages in contributing to the 15-minute city through improvement of connectivity in particular for active travel and facilitating the delivery of public transport infrastructure and services, and public realm enhancement.*

Policy SMT14: City Centre Road Space To manage city centre road-space to best address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, public transport, shared modes and the private car, in particular, where there are intersections between DART, LUAS and Metrolink and with the existing and proposed bus network.

Policy SMT22: Key Sustainable Transport Projects To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city and region and to support the integration of existing public transport infrastructure with other transport modes. In particular the following projects subject to environmental requirements and appropriate planning consents being obtained:

- DART+
- Metrolink from Charlemount to Swords
- BusConnects Core Bus Corridor projects
- Delivery of Luas to Finglas
- Progress and delivery of Luas to Poolbeg and Lucan

Policy SMT23: The Rail Network and Freight Transport (i) To work with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail, the NTA, TII and other operators to progress a coordinated approach to improving the rail network, integrated with other public transport modes to ensure maximum public benefit and promoting sustainable transport and improved connectivity. (ii) To facilitate and support the needs of freight transport in accordance with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022 – 2042 and enhance the capacity on existing rail lines and services to provide improved facilities promoting the principles of sustainable transport to cater for the movement of freight by rail. (iii) To support the outcomes of the Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail Freight 2040 Strategy.

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned lands (technically known as “white land”).

The railway line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- Z1 - Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods
- Z2 - Residential Neighbourhoods (Conservation Areas)
- Z3 - Neighbourhood Centres
- Z4 - District Centres (incorporating Key District Centres)
- Z6 - Employment/Enterprise
- Z9 - Amenity/Open Space Lands/Green Network
- Z14 - Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas (SDRAs)
- Z15 – Community and Social Infrastructure.

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives. Careful design has been considered in relation to the more sensitive zoning objectives such as High Amenity lands.

Protected Structures

There is only one protected structure identified in Dublin City Council jurisdiction along the DART+ Coastal North route:

- Ref: 880; Railway Bridge, Clontarf Road, Dublin 3: “twin-arch cutstone railway bridge inclusive of stone embankment walls”.

Any works associated with the DART + North Coastal project that may affect this bridge have been carefully assessed. Furthermore, it should be noted that by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act, Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, does not apply to development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a railway order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works.

Amenity Designations

There are designated conservation areas associated with the Tolka River, Santry River and a parkland area north of the St. Donagh Road in Kilbarrack. The DART+ Coastal North project either adjoins or oversails these conservation areas, however works associated with the project are unlikely to affect these designations.

Strategic Development Regeneration Area

SDRA 1 – Clongriffin/Belmayne and Environs

The long-term vision for Clongriffin – Belmayne was first set out in the North Fringe Area Action Plan in 2000. A Local Area Plan was made in 2012 and subsequently extended in 2017 for a further 5 years so that its objectives could be fully realised, following the slowdown in construction from 2008. The overall vision of the lands is to facilitate a highly sustainable, mixed use neighbourhood, centred on key public transport interchanges, with a distinct identity and sense of place.

The recently adopted Dublin City Development Plan designates Clongriffin-Belmayne as a Strategic Development and Regeneration Area (SDRA) to provide a strategic spatial and urban design framework, so that the objectives of the City Development Plan can guide future development; and to ensure that the phasing and implementation strategy envisaged in the LAP can be delivered as part of the future build-out of the lands, after the expiry of the LAP.

The main guiding principles of the SDRA that are closely connected to the railway corridor and the DART+ Coastal North project are:

“Completion of Clongriffin KUV centre to include the development of key sites adjacent to the train station, east of Father Collins Park...

Enhance and improve connections between Clongriffin and Baldoyle/Stapolin lands across the railway line at Clongriffin Train Station and at the River Mayne, in coordination with Fingal County Council...

Residential densities shall be highest within the two KUV centres and along Main Street, in proximity to the train station at Clongriffin and along the proposed Core Bus Corridor.”

The main goal of the plan in relation to movement and transport is:

“To promote ease of movement within and access to the area by incorporating a high quality, integrated transport network through improvements to the existing road, rail and public transport network, together with improved cycling and pedestrian facilities within the local area.”

Clongriffin Railway Station is recognised as a key development node with additional height and densities permitted in proximity to the station.

The DART+ Coastal North project, including the rail enhancements at Clongriffin Railway Station, complements the aims and objectives of the SDRA enabling the development of a sustainable, mixed use urban quarter adjoining a high-quality public transport node.

There are no objectives or designated areas within the SDRA that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

5.5.2 Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029

The Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the spatial framework to guide future development within the County with a focus on the places people live, work, visit and do business, and how people interact and move between these places while protecting the environment.

The Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the sustainable future growth of Fingal. At the core of the vision is healthy placemaking, building cohesive and sustainable communities, where cultural, natural and built environment is protected.

The Strategic Vision for the plan contains a number of strategic objectives, the following of which are relevant:

“9. Reduce car dependency and promote and facilitate sustainable modes of transport. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, while supporting an efficient and effective transport system.

10. Protect, enhance and ensure the sustainable use of Fingal’s key infrastructure, including water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities, energy supply including renewables, broadband and transportation.”

The following policies and objectives relating to connectivity and movement are specifically relevant:

“Policy CMP18 – Public Transport.

Support the provision of a high-quality public transportation system that is accessible to all to serve the needs of the County and to enable a significant shift from car-based travel to public transport.

Objective CMO23 – Enabling Public Transport Projects.

Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with

efficient interchange between transport modes to serve needs of the County and the mid-east region in collaboration with the NTA, TII and Irish Rail and other relevant stakeholders.

Objective CMO24 – NTA Strategy.

Support NTA and other stakeholders in implementing the NTA Strategy including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART +, LUAS and the GDA Cycle Network.”

On reflecting upon the impacts of Brexit and Covid-19, the following employment and economic opportunities are identified:

“Infrastructure provision will be a key factor for the economic development of the County and the prospective MetroLink, BusConnects and DART+ projects will bring significant economic benefits to Fingal. Transport and infrastructure interventions are expected to facilitate the modal shift in alignment with the policy hierarchy and national, regional and local objectives such that they encourage sustainable ways of improving Fingal’s integration, connectivity and the movement of workers.”

Strategic employment aims also highlight the following:

“North Fringe – Baldoyle-Stapolin – The DART Expansion Programme will support ongoing large-scale urban expansion of the North Fringe lands. Employment generators in these areas include mixed-use districts with retail and service provision.”

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned (technically known as “white land”). The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- CI - Community Infrastructure
- GB - Greenbelt
- GE - General Employment
- HA - High Amenity
- LC - Local Centre
- MC – Major Town Centre
- MRE - Metro and Rail Economic Corridor
- OS - Open Space
- RA - Residential Area
- RS - Residential
- RU - Rural
- TC - Town And District Centre

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives. Careful design has been considered in relation to the more sensitive zoning objectives such as High Amenity lands and Greenbelt areas.

Protected Structures

There are a significant number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations. These are detailed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of the EIAR. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed.

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a railway order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

Site Specific Objectives

There are a number of Indicative Cycle/Pedestrian Routes adjoining the existing railway line including:

- Howth Junction north to Grange Road.
- Sutton Station east to Howth Station.
- Malahide Estuary north across Malahide Railway Viaduct.
- From Donabate north across the Rogerstown Viaduct.
- Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway.

Local Objectives

2: *Promote and facilitate a pedestrian over-bridge as part of an attractive walkway along Tanner's Water Lane to the proposed coastal path linking to the town centre.*

34: *Completion of the Broadmeadow Way between Malahide and Donabate to be prioritised during the lifetime of this Development Plan.*

51: *Provide for a walkway and cycleway across the rail line to Malahide Community School.*

88: *Promote the improvement of access to Howth Junction Rail Station.*

The design of the DART+ Coastal North project has taken these objectives into account.

Area Specific Plans

5.5.2.1 Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP

Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP was adopted in 2013 and extended to May 2023. Although the LAP has recently expired, with lands now being guided by the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029, work done to date on the DART+ Coastal North project has been aligned with the objectives set out in the LAP.

The LAP lands are located on the southern boundary of Fingal County Council where they meet the administrative area of Dublin City Council along the Dublin – Belfast railway. To the west of the railway lies the developing mixed-use area of Clongriffin within Dublin City Council's wider North Fringe Area encompassing Northern Cross / Clare Hall / Belmayne to Clongriffin. This, along with Baldoyle-Stapolin, is one of Dublin's larger new development areas and, when completed, is envisaged to have up to 10,000 new homes as well as new retail and commercial areas.

The DART+ Coastal North project will help realise the visions and objectives of the Plan. It will provide a better service to the area, thereby supporting the full development of the village and greater usage of the DART, leading to a more sustainable community.

“Support the NTA’s proposed electrification of the Northern Line from Malahide to Balbriggan to allow an extension of DART services to Balbriggan.”

The majority of the lands zoned in the LAP are within 1000m of Donabate railway station. The DART+ Coastal North project will help to facilitate the development of these lands in a sustainable manner.

A DART+ Coastal North project compound and substation are proposed on site located within the southwest portion of the LAP. This land is designated within the LAP as being not suitable for residential development due to potential flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out for this purpose and found the site not to be a flood risk.

There are no other policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

5.5.3 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22nd September 2021 and came into effect on 3rd November 2021.

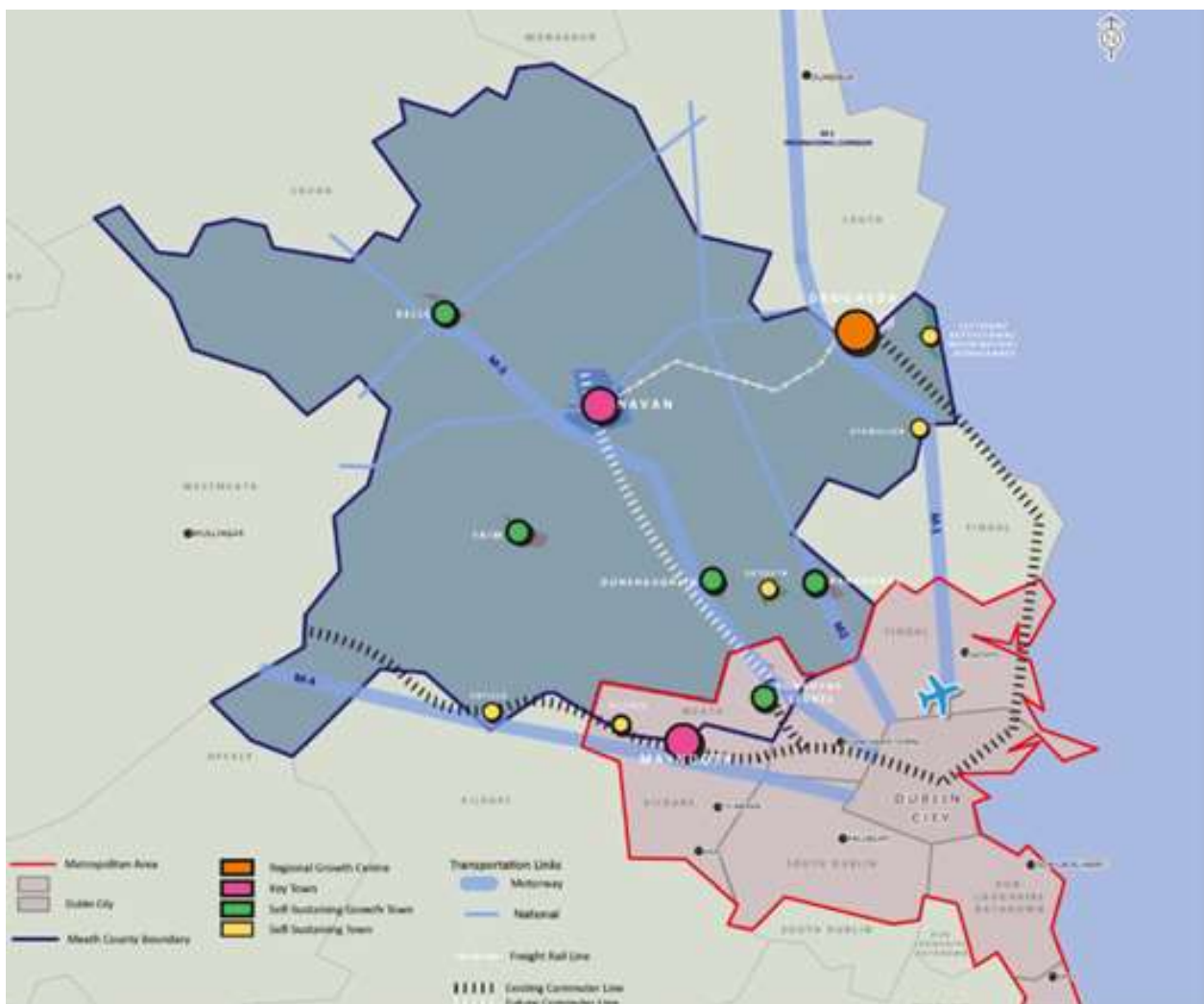


Figure 5-5 Meath Core Strategy Map, Source: Meath Development Plan 2021-2027

It is a strategic aim of the Development Plan to create attractive efficient compact settlements which reduce the need to travel and improve the quality of life for inhabitants.

The following policies and objectives in the Development Plan of specific relevance to the DART+ Coastal North project include:

“MOV POL 1: To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport, in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031

MOV POL 3: To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with the strategic vision and the specific policies of the Development Plan.

Zoning Objectives

The railway line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- A1 – Existing Residential
- A2 – New Residential
- B1 – Commercial Town or Village Centre
- E1/E2 – Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses) / General Enterprise & Employment
- F1 – Open Space
- G1 – Community Infrastructure
- RA – Rural Area
- TU – Transport and Utilities
- WL – White Lands (To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of a strategic urban centre).

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations as detailed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of the EIAR. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed.

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a railway order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

5.5.4 Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 30th September 2021. The Plan came into effect on 11th November 2021. The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 has superseded the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 and the North Drogheda and Environs Local Area Plan.

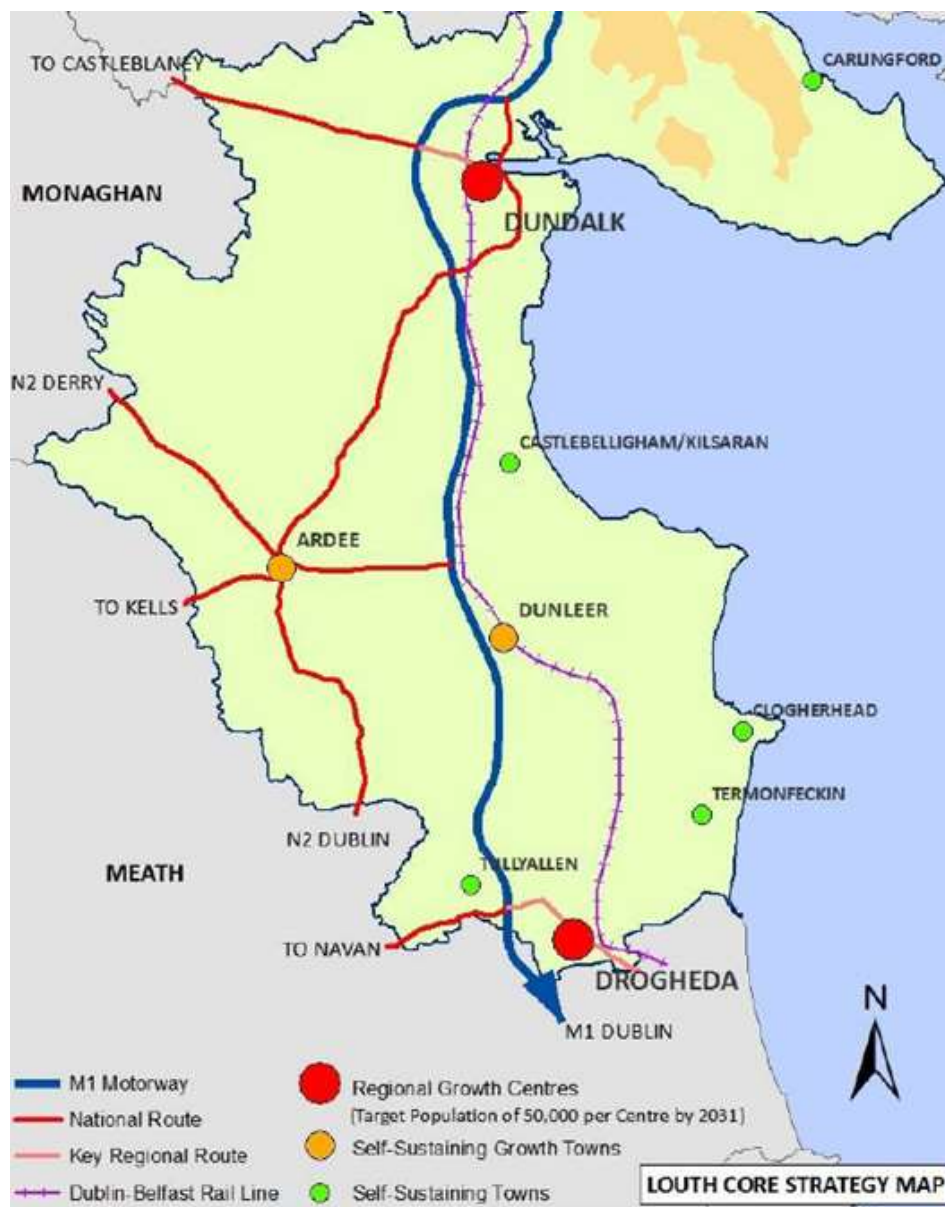


Figure 5-6 Louth Core Strategy Map, Source: Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

A key priority of the plan is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town's hinterlands and enhance the role of Drogheda as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The Plan states the following in relation to Drogheda:

“The goal of achieving compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility and the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda to grow as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC). The town will benefit from the extension of the DART service and improvements will be required to MacBride station relating to accessibility.”

The plan recognises that the “DART Expansion Programme” is an important growth enabler for Drogheda as it would improve the connectivity to Dublin due to the increased frequency of services, making the town more accessible and attractive for economic investment and employment generating development.

The following policies and objectives in the plan are relevant:

“SS13: To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda

MOV 2: To facilitate the integration of land use with sustainable transportation infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of RPO 8.1 in the RSES by supporting the creation of a critical mass of population and employment related development that would maximise investment in public transport infrastructure and create compact, sustainable settlements.

MOV 12: To support the DART Expansion Programme including new infrastructure and the electrification of existing lines along the northern rail line to Drogheda.”

The DART+ Coastal North project supports the overall vision in the Plan, particularly in relation to the development of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre.

Zoning Objectives

The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- A1 – Existing Residential
- A2 – New Residential
- J1 – Transportation Development Hub

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives.

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures in or adjoining the Drogheda railway station, as detailed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of the EIAR. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed.

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a railway order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

5.6 Rail Policy

5.6.1 2030 Rail Network Strategy Review

In 2011, IÉ carried out a review of future development requirements of the IÉ InterCity Network (ICN) and regional services. It sets out a broad strategic goal for the rail network to *“provide safe, accessible and integrated rail services that contribute to sustainable economic and regional development in an efficient manner.”*

The review states that the Dublin – Belfast corridor *“carries a relatively high level of passenger demand, although much of this is accounted for by outer-commuting services to Drogheda and Dundalk.”*

In terms of the distribution of passenger demand across the various routes, the Strategy review indicates that in 2011, the Drogheda commuter route accounted for the highest proportion (26.9%) of passenger, followed by the Maynooth commuter route (19.3%), the Cork inter-city route (10.9%) and the Kildare commuter route (8.2%). The implementation of the DART+ Coastal North project is supported by and aligns with the 2030 Rail Network Strategy Review as it proposed increased electrification of the rail network and increased rail capacity.

5.6.2 Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027

IÉ prepared the 2027 Strategy for its national railway network. The Strategy will aid IÉ to deliver high-capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the increase in travel resulting from the anticipated population and employment growth, and to facilitate Ireland in improving sustainable mobility options and reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector.

The Strategy identifies the DART+ Programme as a priority investment project and highlights that the services along the DART line *“have all experienced significant passenger growth over recent years with overcrowding increasingly experienced by customers on some peak services”*. The Strategy notes that the DART+ Programme will benefit the Intercity outer GDA services by increasing the capacity along the core rail corridors in the GDA.

In the case of DART+ Coastal North project, the Strategy states that the Northern DART line will benefit from increased capacity and reliability through projects such as the *“Electrification and resignalling of Northern Line from Malahide to Drogheda”*.

5.6.3 All-Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation Paper

In November 2021, the Department of Transport launched and published an All-Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation Paper, focusing on delivering 6 goals namely:

- Goal 1: Contribute to Decarbonisation
- Goal 2: Improve All Island Connectivity Between Major Cities
- Goal 3: Enhance Regional And Rural Accessibility
- Goal 4: Encourage Sustainable Mobility
- Goal 5: Foster Economic Activity
- Goal 6: Achieve Economic and Financial Feasibility.

The Review expands on the commitment under the New Decade, New Approach agreement to examine the feasibility of a high/higher speed rail link between Belfast, Dublin and Cork and will look at ways to improve our current rail infrastructure, including the feasibility of high/higher speeds and electrification, better connections to the North-West, and role of rail in the efficient movement of goods.

Between 25 July and 29 September 2023, the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and the Department of Transport in Ireland jointly sought on the Review's draft report, and on the reports accompanying the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process required by law in both jurisdictions.

Whilst the outcomes of this review are not yet known it is noted that the DART+ Coastal North project is in alignment as it will directly promote decarbonisation through electrification of the network, enhance connectivity, foster economic activity, and contribute to sustainable mobility.

6. CONCLUSION

This Planning Report has demonstrated that the DART+ Coastal North project is supported by, and is consistent with, National and regional policies and objectives. The National Planning Framework identifies DART+ Programme as a cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland. It identifies the need for the development of a reliable, sustainable, and integrated public transport network at national level and particularly in the GDA where population and public transport demand is set to continue to increase. The Proposed Development will facilitate the realisation of several of the National Planning Framework national strategic objectives including: NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility, NSO 1 Compact Growth and NSO 8 Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society which is required to be achieved by 2050. The implementation of the DART+ programme is also integral to the Climate Action Plan 2023.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region promotes the sustainable growth of Dublin and regional centres, aligning services with population and economic growth, compact growth in urban settlements and optimising the use of infrastructure including public transport. The RSES supports the DART+ programme and the DART+ Coastal North project.

The DART+ programme is supported by all local authorities in their development plans through the following policies:

- Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028: SMT22: *“To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city and region and to support the integration of existing public transport infrastructure with other transport modes. In particular the following projects subject to environmental requirements and appropriate planning consents being obtained: DART+”.*
- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029: Objective CMO23: *“Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes to serve needs of the County and the mid-east region in collaboration with the NTA, TII and Irish Rail and other relevant stakeholders”.*
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027: MOV POL 1: *“To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport, in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031”*
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027: SS13: *“To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda”.*

Consultation with the public, local authorities and statutory bodies has been a valuable component of the project undertaken throughout the design and environmental assessment process and has contributed to significant and positive design changes. The design has been assessed in the EIAR and NIS of the project and is the optimal design to deliver on the project objectives.

The above review demonstrates that the DART+ Coastal North project delivers on the overall DART+ Programme objectives to include:

- *“Cater for existing heavy rail travel demand and support long-term patronage growth along established rail corridors in the GDA through the provision of a higher frequency, higher capacity, electrified heavy rail service which supports sustainable economic development and population growth”.*
- *“Improve accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved inter-rail and inter-modal connectivity and integration with other public transport services”.*

“Enable further urban compact growth along existing rail corridors, unlock regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in the GDA, for present and future generations, through the provision of a higher capacity heavy rail network”.

- *“Deliver an efficient, sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient heavy rail network, which contributes to a reduction in congestion on the road network in the GDA and which supports the advancement of Ireland’s transition to a low emissions transport system and delivery of Ireland’s emission reduction targets”.*
- *“Provide a higher standard of customer experience including provision of clean, safe, modern vehicles and a reliable and punctual service with regulated and integrated fares”.*

The DART+ Coastal North project will make a significant positive contribution to the achieving multiple cross-cutting planning policy objectives across international, EU, national and at local planning level. The project supports the sustainable development of the GDA specifically relating to integrated planning and transportation solutions, sustainable mobility, enabling citizen participation to address climate action and will deliver a safer more efficient, low carbon, reliable and resilient rail network for communities today and into the future.