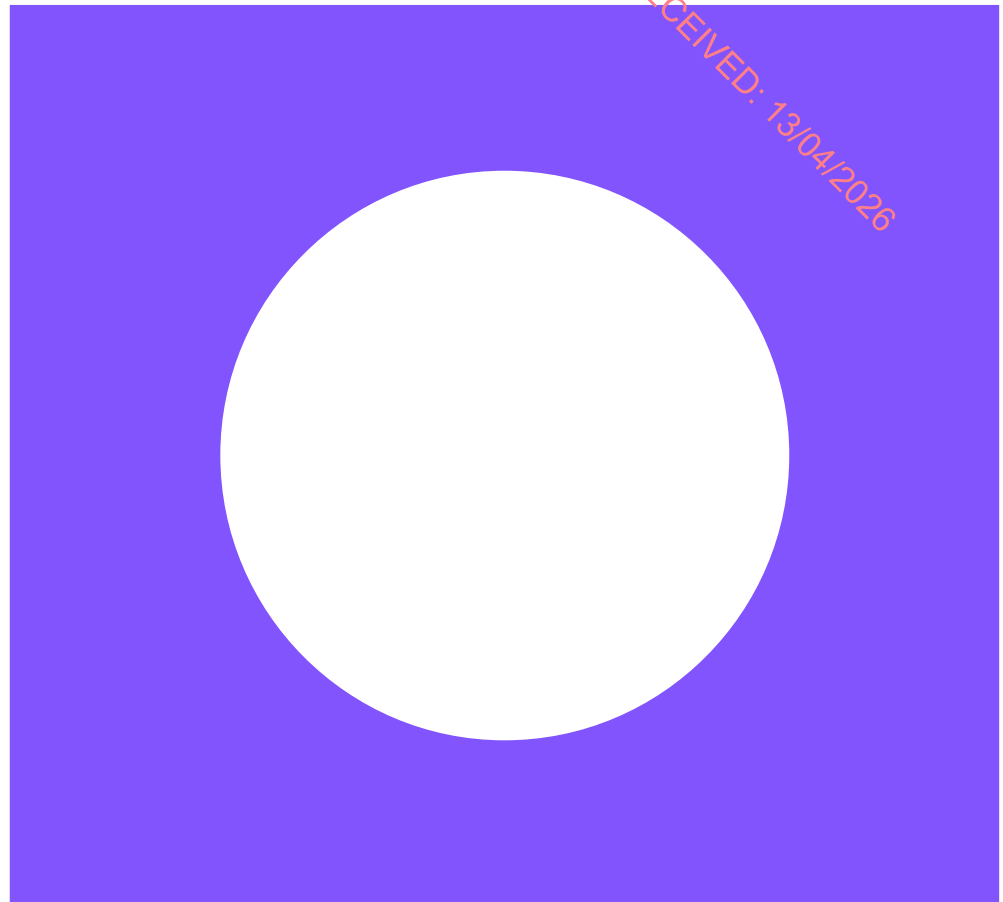


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Shelburne Energy Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 6 Population and Human Health

April 2026

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Shelburne Energy Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 6 Population and Human Health

April 2026

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6 Population and Human Health

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the likely significant effects of the Proposed Project on population and human health. This includes consideration of the potential for both adverse and beneficial effects, during construction and operation, with regards to residential properties, community resources, local businesses, employment, tourism, and human health. The assessment is based on the Proposed Project as described in Chapter 5 of this EIAR.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines 2022 state that:

'...in an EIAR, the assessment of impacts on population and human health should refer to the assessments of those factors under which human health effects might occur, as addressed elsewhere in this EIAR e.g. under the environmental factors of air, water, soil etc'

The analysis of human health consequently considers those impacts associated with relevant environmental disciplines which have been comprehensively addressed elsewhere in this report including:

- Land, Soils and Hydrogeology (Chapter 8)
- Surface Water Resources and Flooding (Chapter 9)
- Air Quality (Chapter 10)
- Noise and Vibration (Chapter 11)
- The Landscape (Chapter 12)
- Architecture, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (Chapter 13)
- Roads, Traffic and Transportation (Chapter 14)
- Material Assets and Waste Management (Chapter 15)
- Climate (Chapter 16)
- Major Accidents and/or Disasters (Chapter 17)

Mitigation and monitoring measures, residual impacts and cumulative impacts are also discussed where appropriate.

6.2 Policy and guidance

Policies and guidance documents of potential relevance to the population and human health topic are set out in this section.

These policy and guidance documents have been used to inform this chapter of the EIAR.

6.2.1 Legislation

Under the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), development projects in the EU must be assessed for their impact on the environment. The Directive states that EIA must assess the direct and indirect significant impact of a project based on a range of environmental factors, including population and human health.

6.2.2 Policies

The following national, regional, and local equality, planning policy and strategy documents have a bearing on this assessment.

6.2.2.1 National policies

Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 comprises two key documents: the First Revision to the National Planning Framework¹ (NPF) and the National Development Plan² (NDP). The NPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies for Ireland. It provides a framework detailing how key national priorities will be addressed through the planning system, including sustaining and developing vibrant, climate resilient communities. The NDP sets out the Government's investment strategy to achieve Project Ireland 2040's objectives.

Section 1.3 of the NPF sets out Ireland's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). NSOs relevant to the Proposed Project and the population and human health assessment include:

- NSO 3: Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
- NSO 6: A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
- NSO 8: Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society
- NSO 9: Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources

Section 3.4 of the NPF sets out core planning and place-making principles for the Southern Region, including integrating the planning, management, and development of rural and local communities for regional benefit, as well as harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum.

Rural Ireland contributes significantly to the country's energy needs, however there is a need to plan for the transition to low carbon economy. Section 9 of the NPF highlights Ireland's environmental and sustainability goals, which includes resource efficiency and transition to a low carbon energy future. In this section, it is noted that renewable energy projects have often been delivered in rural areas, and that this can include co-location with agricultural activities.

Policies relevant to the Proposed Project and the population and human health assessment include:

- National Policy Objective 30: "Facilitate the development of the rural economy, in a manner consistent with the national climate objective, through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism".
- National Policy Objective 36: "Support the objectives of public health policy including the Healthy Ireland Framework and the National Physical Activity Plan, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy".
- National Policy Objective 66: "The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the medium and longer-term requirements of all relevant environmental and climate legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital".

¹ Government of Ireland (2019): 'Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework'. Available at: [National Planning Framework First Revision – April 2025 - The National Planning Framework](#)

² Government of Ireland (2021): 'Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan 2021-2030'. Available at: [gov.ie - Government launches the renewed National Development Plan 2021-2030 \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

Our Rural Future, Rural Development Policy 2021-2025³

Our Rural Future provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over the 2021-2025 period. The Government's vision is for a thriving rural Ireland, and Our Rural Future aims to 'enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of people living in rural areas and build resilient and sustainable rural communities and economies through integrated investment, support and services'. Key deliverables noted in the document include to: 'support health and wellbeing of rural communities' and 'supporting a Just Transition to a climate neutral economy'.

Healthy Ireland, A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2019-2025⁴

Healthy Ireland is a broad framework of actions being undertaken by government departments, public sector organisations, businesses and communities to improve health and wellbeing and reduce the risks posed to future generations. The vision for Healthy Ireland is 'a healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility'.

Healthy Ireland's central goals are to:

- increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life;
- reduce health inequalities;
- protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing; and
- create an environment where every individual and sector can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

Tourism Development & Innovation: A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022⁵

This strategy outlines a national investment framework to enhance Ireland's tourism sector, aiming to:

- Deliver world-class visitor experiences
- Support sustainable tourism growth
- Increase employment and economic contribution
- Strengthen Ireland's international tourism appeal

The strategy emphasises innovation, community involvement, and sustainability, using the VICE model (Visitors, Industry, Community, Environment). Health and wellbeing of rural communities are core themes in this strategy, with a vision to foster environments that encourage physical activity, social connection, and economic vitality.

Investments in outdoor infrastructure such as walking trails and access to natural landscapes, the strategy promotes active lifestyles and mental wellness. These developments should not only attract tourists but also provide local residents with improved recreational spaces, contributing to healthier daily routines and stronger connections to nature.

³ Government of Ireland (2021): Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025'. Available at: [gov.ie - Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications/our-rural-future-rural-development-policy-2021-2025/)

⁴ Government of Ireland (2019): Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2026. Available at: [gov.ie - Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2026 \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications/healthy-ireland-framework-2019-2026/)

⁵ Government of Ireland (2016): Tourism Development & Innovation. Available at: [Fáilte Ireland - Tourism Development & Innovation - A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022](https://www.fair.ie/en/tourism-development-innovation-a-strategy-for-investment-2016-2022/)

6.2.2.2 Regional policies

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032⁶

The RSES sets out a strategic development framework to address challenges and opportunities facing the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) area over the 2020 to 2032 period. It provides a high-level development framework for the region that supports the implementation of the NPF and other Government economic policies and aspirations.

Well-being and improving quality of life are core themes in the RSES. This is set to be delivered through transformative change, ensuring sustainable, planned and infrastructure-led development is adopted. (Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 175).

6.2.2.3 Local policy

Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028⁷

The Wexford County Development Plan sets out a comprehensive vision for the county's growth, focusing on sustainable development, climate action, economic resilience, and community wellbeing. Its primary aim is to guide land use and infrastructure planning in a way that supports balanced regional development, protects the environment, and enhances quality of life for all residents. The plan integrates strategies across housing, transportation, tourism, green infrastructure, and social services to ensure that development is inclusive, future-proofed, and environmentally responsible.

The County Development Plan places strong emphasis on sustainable infrastructure, such as active travel networks, green spaces, recreational amenities, and accessible public transport. These elements are designed to encourage physical activity, reduce car dependency, and improve air quality. The plan also supports the development of sustainable communities by promoting compact growth, mixed-use development, and access to healthcare, education, and social services. By embedding health-promoting principles into the fabric of planning and infrastructure, the strategy aims to create healthier, more connected, and more resilient communities across Wexford.

6.2.3 Guidance

- European Commission – Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report⁸ (EU guidance)
- EPA – Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports⁹ (Irish guidance)
- Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) – Health Impact Assessment Guidance: Manual and Technical Guidance¹⁰

⁶ Government of Ireland (2021): Southern Regional Assembly. Available at: [Southern Regional Assembly \(southernassembly.ie\)](https://southernassembly.ie)

⁷ Wexford County Council (2022): Development Plan 2022-2028. Available at: [Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 | Wexford County Council](#)

⁸ European Commission (2017): 'Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects. Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report'. Available at: [Circabc \(europa.eu\)](https://circabc.europa.eu)

⁹ Environmental Protection Agency (2022): 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports'. Available at: [Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports \(EIAR\) \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/publications/default.aspx?category=4)

¹⁰ Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2021): Health Impact Assessment Guidance: Manual and Technical Guidance. Available at: [Health Impact Assessment | Institute of Public Health](https://www.hia.ie/)

- Government of Ireland – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment¹¹ (Irish guidance)
- Institution of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) – Health in Environmental Impact Assessment: A primer for a proportionate approach¹²
- IEMA – Determining Significance for Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment¹³

It should be noted that, with the exception of EPA guidelines, standards set out in other guidance / methodologies have been used to guide the assessment, rather than being used as standards to follow.

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Approach to data collection

The following information and data sources (Table 6.1) have been considered during the production of this EIAR.

Table 6.1: Data sources

Data Source	Date	Data Contents
Central Statistics Office (CSO) www.cso.ie	Census 2022	Demographics Settlements Labour Force Survey
Geodirectory Data	Various	Settlements Land use
Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Mapping and aerial photography (www.osi.ie)	Various	Settlements Land use
Corine land cover data (www.epa.ie)	2018	Land use
Open Street Mapping (www.openstreetmap.org)	Various	Land use
Google Street Mapping	Various	Land use

6.3.2 Approach to impact assessment

There are no published standards or technical guidelines in Ireland that set out preferred methodology for assessing the likely population and human health effects of a development. However, there are a series of commonly used, best-practice methodologies for assigning the significance of population and human health effects during the construction and operation of a development. This section describes the approach used to conduct this assessment.

The assessment methodology proceeds by determining the sensitivity of receptors that have the potential to be affected by the construction or operation of the Proposed Project. The magnitude of impacts experienced by those receptors is then determined. A combination of the sensitivity of receptor and the magnitude of impact in relation to the receptor has been used to assess the significance of potential effects.

¹¹ Government of Ireland (2018): 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment'. Available at: gov.ie - [Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment \(August 2018\)](http://gov.ie) (www.gov.ie)

¹² Institution of Environmental Management and Assessment (2017): Health in Environmental Impact Assessment: A primer for a proportionate approach. Available at: [Health in impact assessment](http://www.iema.ie)

¹³ Institution of Environmental Management and Assessment (2022): Determining Significance for Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment. Available at: [iema-eia-guide-to-determining-significance-for-human-health-nov-2022.pdf](http://www.iema.ie)

The outcome has been used to aid the development of appropriate mitigation measures in order to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects.

The steps undertaken for the assessment are as follows:

1. Identifying receptors in the study area and determining their sensitivity to potential changes in accordance with best practice guidance listed in 6.2.3 above.
2. Identifying activities and components of the Proposed Project that could have an impact on population and human health receptors.
3. Determining the magnitude of the impacts these receptors will experience.
4. Assessing the significance of effects that arise as a result of the impacts on the receptors, incorporating any mitigation measures included within the Proposed Project, and assessing any residual effects.

This chapter utilises good practice, informed guidance as set out in section 6.2.3 above.

6.3.2.1 Technical scope

In accordance with the EPA guidelines¹⁴, this assessment has considered effects on community receptors arising as a result of the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the Proposed Project. The assessment considers both direct and indirect effects on receptors arising as a result of the Proposed Project, in particular, effects on:

- **Land use and social considerations**, including effects on land requirements (both temporary and permanent) and accessibility to community receptors (namely, residential properties (and gardens); community facilities, businesses and public open spaces (such as parks and play areas));
- **Economic activity** including employment and tourism; and
- **Human health**, including environmental effects on human health contained in corresponding chapters (such as air quality, noise, landscape and traffic), and general neighbourhood quality (the interactions between these environmental effects).

Neighbourhood quality effects occur if there are two significant adverse effects occurring at the same location at the same time – impacting the amenity of a neighbourhood, street, community facility or open space. These potential effects are noise and vibration, air, the landscape and road and traffic effects.

6.3.2.2 Assessment criteria

Sensitivity of receptors

The sensitivity of receptors is determined by their capacity to absorb proposed changes. It reflects their vulnerability to change, resilience to change, and in some cases the availability of alternative resources of a similar value.

Table 6.2 below sets out criteria that have been used to describe and assess the sensitivity of receptors.

Table 6.2: Sensitivity criteria for receptors

Sensitivity	Criteria
Very High	• A vulnerable receptor with no means to absorb changes. • A receptor accessed on a daily basis.

¹⁴ Environmental Protection Agency (2022): 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports'. Available at: [Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports \(EIAR\) \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/publications-and-resources/publications/assessing-impacts/assessing-impacts-guidelines)

Sensitivity	Criteria
	- No alternative facilities, access arrangements or opportunities are available within an easily accessible distance. - Daily activities prevented. - Population with a very poor health status
High	- A vulnerable receptor with very little capacity and means to absorb changes. - No alternative facilities, access arrangements or opportunities are available within an easily accessible distance. - A frequently accessed resource. - High level of deprivation - Daily activities limited a lot. - Population with a poor health status
Medium	- A receptor with limited capacity and means to absorb changes. - A limited range of alternative facilities, access arrangements or opportunities are available within an easily accessible distance. - A moderately, or-semi-frequently accessed resource. - Moderate level of deprivation - Daily activities moderately limited - Population with a health status in line with regional/national average
Low	- A non-vulnerable receptor with sufficient capacity and means to absorb changes. - A wide range of alternative facilities, access arrangements or opportunities are available within an easily accessible distance. - An infrequently accessed resource. - Low level of deprivation - Daily activities limited a little. - Population with a good health status
Negligible	- A receptor that is currently not in use - Very low levels of deprivation / an affluent area - Daily activities not limited at all.

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024 (adapted from EPA, 2022; IEMA, 2022; IPH, 2021)

Magnitude of impact

To evaluate the magnitude of impact, each impact has been assessed in terms of the following indicators:

- Spatial scope – whether impacts are likely to be felt within the study area or more widely
- Extent – how many community resources are likely to experience impacts and the extent of these impacts.
- Duration – whether the impacts would be short or long-term (as defined by EPA guidelines).
- Reversibility – whether the impact is permanent or temporary (as defined by EPA guidelines).

The criteria for defining magnitude for the assessment of impacts are defined in the table below.

Table 6.3: Impact magnitude criteria

Magnitude	Criteria
Major	- A large proportion of the study area is impacted - The impact is permanent (lasting over 60 years) or long-term (lasting 15 to 60 years) - Demolition / total loss of a resource - Partial loss of resource and/or quality and integrity of the receptor - Unable to or requires extreme intervention to return to the baseline

Magnitude	Criteria
Moderate	• A moderate proportion of the study area is impacted. • The duration over which the impact is experienced is medium-term (lasting seven to 15 years). • Impacts a moderate number of receptors • Partial loss of/damage to key characteristics, features or elements of the receptor • Requires considerable intervention to return to the baseline
Minor	• A small proportion of the study area is impacted • The duration over which the impact is experienced is short-term (lasting one to seven years) • Affects a small number of receptors • Minor loss of, or alteration to, key characteristics, features or elements of the receptor • Baseline returns without intervention or with only limited intervention
Negligible	• A very small proportion of the study area is impacted • Impact is very short-term (lasting less than a year) • Impacts a very few number of receptors • Very minor loss or detrimental alteration to characteristics, features or elements of the receptor • Baseline remains consistent
Indiscernible	• A few receptors affected • Impact is momentary / brief (lasting less than a day) • No loss or detrimental alteration to the receptor • No change to baseline

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024 (adapted from EPA, 2022; IEMA, 2022; IPH, 2021).

For impacts which do not fall entirely into the assessment criteria for sensitivity and magnitude, professional judgement and justifications have been provided for assigning sensitivity and magnitude categories to each impact.

Significance of effect

Effect significance is a product of the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of effects. In line with EPA guidance, effects can be:

- Positive – a change which improves the quality of the environment.
- Neutral – no effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
- Negative – a change which reduces the quality of the environment.
- Likely – the effects that can reasonably be expected to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures and properly implemented.
- Unlikely – the effects that can reasonably be expected not to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.

In line with EPA guidance, the significance of effects have been determined as imperceptible, not significant, slight, moderate, significant, very significant and profound. These are described in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: Description of significance of effects

Significance	Description
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
Not significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
Slight effects	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.

Significance	Description
Moderate effects	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends
Significant effects	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Very significant	An effect which, by character, magnitude, duration or intensity, significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
Profound effects	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics

Source: EPA (2022)

Effects that are assessed as moderate to profound are considered to be significant, and would require mitigation. Table 6.5 sets out the relationship between magnitude, sensitivity, and significance.

Table 6.5: Significance of effect

		Magnitude				
		Indiscernible	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major
Sensitivity	Very High	Slight / Not Significant	Moderate / Slight	Significant / Moderate	Very Significant / Significant	Profound
	High	Not Significant	Slight	Moderate	Significant	Profound / Very Significant
	Medium	Not Significant / Imperceptible	Slight / Not Significant	Slight	Moderate	Significant / Moderate
	Low	Imperceptible	Not Significant	Slight / Not Significant	Slight	Moderate
	Negligible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Not Significant / Imperceptible	Not Significant	Slight / Not Significant

Source: Mott MacDonald, 2024 (created using EPA Guidelines, 2022)

6.3.3 Study area

The study area for population and human health assessment is typically defined by the Electoral Division (ED) in which the Proposed Project site is located. ED is the smallest legally defined administrative area in the State for which Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) are published from the Census.

The Proposed Project is located within the EDs of Dunmain and Inch. The study area for residential properties, community facilities, businesses and agricultural landholdings is 500m from the boundary of the Proposed Project. This is due to receptors within 500m of the Proposed Project being more likely to experience potential effects throughout both construction and operation. The study area is shown in Figure 6.1 below. The nearest settlement is the village of Gusserane approximately 170m to the south of the Project site boundary. The study area is extended to include this village. The population and human health conditions are also considered according to the following spatial areas:

- Local Impact Area (LIA): defined as the EDs of Dunmain and Inch
- Wider Impact Area (WIA) – defined as County Wexford

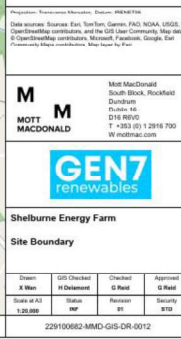
Regional (South East Ireland) and national (Ireland) data has been used as comparator areas.

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KILKENNY WEXFORD

TERFORD

☐ Solar Farm/DCSG Boundary
☐ 220kV Substation
☐ Compound / Cable
☐ Route Boundary



6.3.4 Assumptions and limitations of this EIAR

- The information presented within this chapter reflects that obtained and evaluated at the time of writing and is the most up to-date information currently available.
- The information sourced for this report has been gathered using publicly available, open-source datasets.

A range of publicly available data sources have been used to determine the population and human health baseline. These include statistics on demographics and employment from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Open Street Map (OSM) and Eircode for data on land use, private property and housing, businesses and community land and assets.

- Section 6.4.1 provides an overarching demographic summary of the local population
- Section 6.4.2 provides baseline data in relation to land uses and social considerations
- Section 6.4.3 provides baseline data in relation to economic activity
- Section 6.4.4 provides baseline data in relation to human health.

6.4.1 Population

6.4.1.1 Demographic profile

The table below shows the demographic structure of the LIA, County Wexford, South East Ireland, and Ireland. 2022 Census data indicates that 931 people live in the LIA – an increase of 5% since the previous Census in 2016. This is slightly less so than in wider areas, with County Wexford, South East Ireland, and Ireland each experiencing a higher rise in population (of 9%, 8%, and 8% respectively) over the same period.

Table 6.6: Demographic structure of the LIA

	Total population	Children (<15 years)	Young people (15-24 years)	Working age (15-64 years)	Older people (65+ years)
LIA	931	23%	12%	62%	15%
County Wexford	163,919	20%	12%	63%	17%
South East	457,410	20%	12%	64%	16%
Ireland	5,149,139	20%	13%	65%	15%

Source: CSO Census, 2022

The data suggests that the demographic composition of the LIA is in line with County Wexford, regional, and national proportions:

- 23% of the LIA population are children, compared to 20% in County Wexford, South East Ireland, and Ireland
- Young people represent 12% of the LIA population, this is in line with all wider areas
- 62% of the LIA population are of working age, in line with the wider areas (63%, 64%, and 65% respectively)
- Older people represent 15% of the population in the LIA, this is in line with proportions in the wider areas (17%, 16%, and 15% respectively).

6.4.1.2 Levels of deprivation

Pobal data provides a measurement and comparison of relative levels of deprivation. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index¹⁵ sets out eight levels of deprivation, ranging from 'extremely disadvantaged' to 'extremely affluent' as set out in in Table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7: Pobal HP Deprivation Index

Level	Description
1 (most deprived)	Extremely disadvantaged
2	Very disadvantaged
3	Disadvantaged
4	Marginally below average
5	Marginally above average
6	Affluent
7	Very affluent
8 (least deprived)	Extremely affluent

Source: Pobal, 2022

¹⁵ Pobal: HP Deprivation Indices, 2022. Available at: [Pobal HP Deprivation Index Launched - Pobal](#)

According to the Index, the electoral divisions of Dunmain and Inch, which make up the LIA, are respectively marginally above and below average levels of deprivation. The overall level of deprivation across County Wexford is also marginally below average, which indicates that the LIA performs similarly to County Wexford and wider areas in terms of deprivation.

6.4.2 Land uses and social considerations

As per the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Project site is located within rural area type 'Stronger Rural Areas'.

The Proposed Project site is a greenfield agricultural site, surrounded by agricultural land in its immediate vicinity. The nearest settlement is the village of Gusserane approximately 170m to the south of the Project site boundary. Other CSO settlements close to the Proposed Project are Newbawn (approximately 3km east of the Proposed Project) and Ballycullane (approximately 3km south of the Proposed Project).

The Wexford County Development Plan¹⁶ (WCDP) identifies Newbawn as 'Level 5 Small Villages Category 1', Ballycullane as 'Level 4 Large Villages', and Gusserane as 'Level 5 Small Villages Category 2'. The WCDP Settlement Hierarchy is developed around seven levels, each serving a different strategic role to support the urban and rural development strategy objectives. Settlements have been allocated a different level based on a range of factors, including the Core Strategy's guiding principles; population scale; regional and sub-regional influence; and infrastructure capacities. Definitions for each of these categories can found in Table 6.8, and a map of County Wexford's settlements in these seven categories can be found on Figure 6.1 below. New Ross is the nearest town to the Proposed Project, approximately 6.4km to the northwest of the Proposed Project.

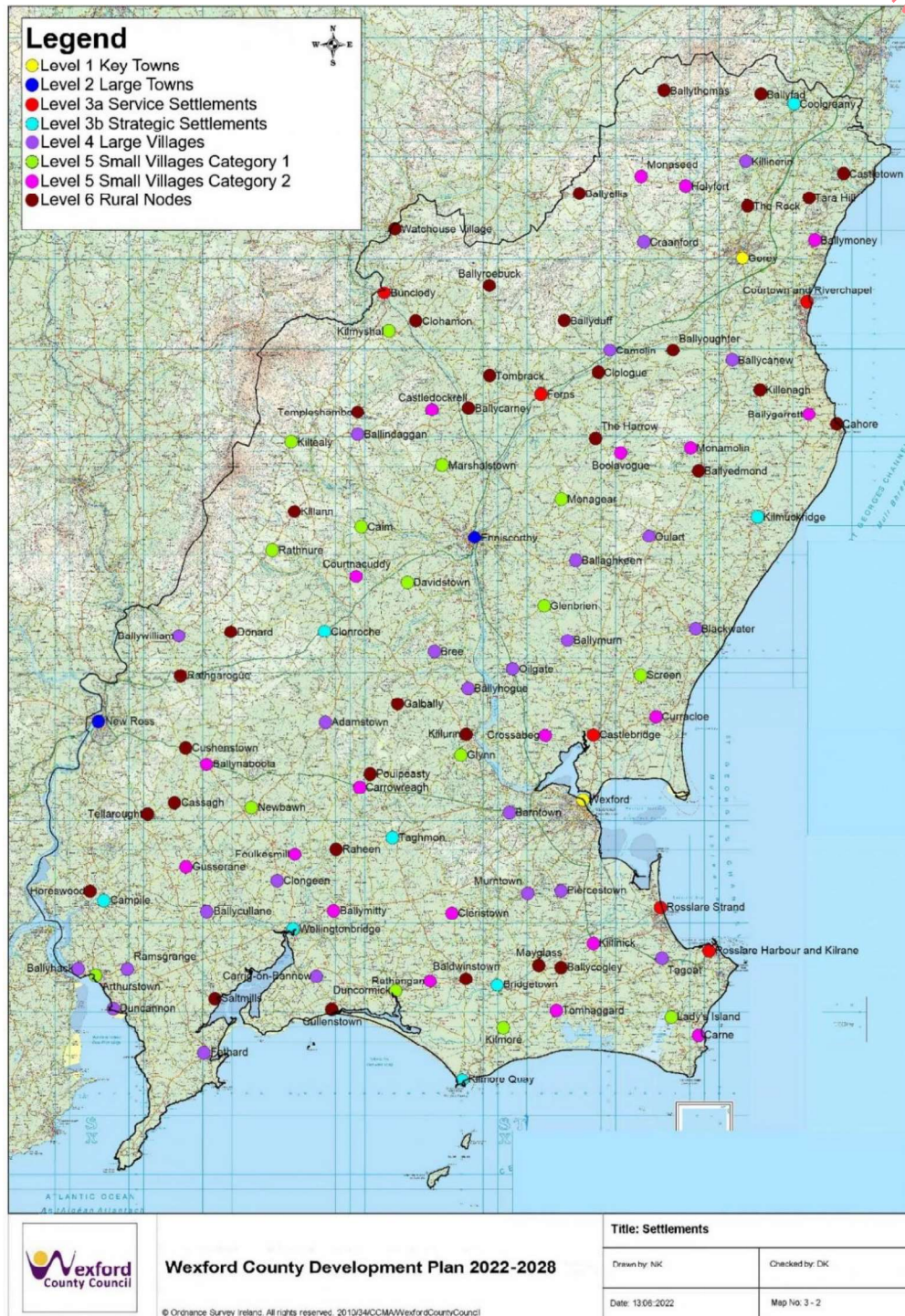
Table 6.8: WCDP Settlement Hierarchy category definitions

Settlement type	Definition
Level 1 Key Town	Self-sustaining regional driver which has a comparable structure to the five centres designated in the National Planning Framework (NPF)
Level 2 Large Town	Towns with a population of >10,000 in 2016
Level 3a Service Settlements	Settlements of varied sizes which share a common characteristic of being important service settlements for their local communities and wider rural hinterlands
Level 3b Strategic Settlements	Settlements of important contributors to economic activity at sub-county level with existing large employers; potential to be regenerated through tourism; and performing important functions including retail, commercial, education, residential, service and amenity functions for wide sub-county hinterlands
Level 4 Large Villages	Settlements of varied sizes and scale which share common characteristics of providing important local level services. Villages with identifiable settlement structures and established populations with potential to support additional growth
Level 5 Small Villages Category 1	Villages with identifiable settlement structures, established populations, with potential to support a small quantum of additional growth
Level 5 Small Villages Category 2	Similar to Category 1 villages, with the exception that they are generally smaller in scale, with more limited infrastructure and as such can accommodate lesser levels of growth than Category 1 villages
Open Countryside	Comprises those parts of the county outside of settlements in Level 1 to 6

Source: Wexford County Council (2022): WCDP

¹⁶ Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 (2022): Chapter 3: Core Strategy.

Figure 6.2: County Wexford Settlement Hierarchy



Source: Wexford County Council (2022) WCDP

6.4.2.1 Residential properties

There are 348 residential properties in the LIA¹⁷, which makes up 0.5% of the housing stock in County Wexford. There are 131 residential properties located within 500 meters of the Proposed Project.

A review of planning applications and publicly available mapping in the area show that there are currently no planned residential developments within 500m of the Proposed Project boundary.

6.4.2.2 Community facilities

There are several community facilities located within 500 meters of the Proposed Project. This includes schools, places of worship, and sports centres, the majority of which are located in Gusserane, to the south of the Proposed Project. They are listed below:

- Saint Colman's Well (59m from Area B)
- Owenduff Burial Ground (65m from Area B)
- Gusserane Community Hall (150m from Area C)
- Gusserane National School (206m from Area C)
- Gusserane Handball Club (290m from Area C)
- Gusserane Church – St John the Baptist Church (324m from area C)
- Gusserane Cemetery (376m from area C)
- Gusserane O'Rahilly's Gaelic Athletic Association club (445m from Area C)

6.4.2.3 Businesses

There are a number of businesses located within 500 meters of the Proposed Project. The table below lists all of these by sector -based on the European NACE¹⁸ classification system.

Table 6.9: Businesses within 500m of the Proposed Project by economic sector

Economic sector	Business name
Construction Of Buildings	W. & M. Construction
	Fca Developments (New Ross) Limited
	Patrick John Construction Limited
	Bws Construction Services Limited
	Chameleon Properties Limited
Joinery Installation	Michael Hanton
Sale of Cars and Light Motor Vehicles	Murphy Cars
Maintenance and Repair of Motor Vehicles	Dms Garage Ltd.
Renting and Leasing of Other Machinery, Equipment and Tangible Goods	Econ Plant Hire
	P. Whitty
Other Personal Services	K9 Klippers

¹⁷ Central Statistics Office (2022): Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate. Available at: [F2095 - Housing Stock and Vacancy Rate \(cso.ie\)](https://www.cso.ie/en/tables/2022/housing-stock-and-vacancy-rate/)

¹⁸ The N.A.C.E. is the 'Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community'. It allows to classify all companies in the European Union according to their activities.

6.4.2.4 Agricultural land

The site of the Proposed Project comprises improved and wet agricultural grassland and is used for tillage production and animal grazing. It is proposed that all solar farm array areas (A, B and C) will continue to retain agricultural practices through the application of sheep grazing. This is a common agricultural practice at established solar energy farm locations for the maintenance of grassed areas, this has a mutual benefit of both retaining agricultural practices and being a sustainable farming practice which protects solar panels from vegetation growth. There are 55 agricultural land holdings with a combined 3,007 hectares of farmland within the LIA¹⁹. There are 17 farm holdings located within 500 meters of the Proposed Project.

6.4.2.5 Transport network

Transport facilities are important community infrastructure. Six bus services utilise sections of the road network in the study area. Table 6.10 summarises the local services and their associated frequencies.

Table 6.10: Local Bus Routes

Route No.	Operator	Route	Weekday Frequency	Weekend Frequency
370	Bus Eireann	Waterford – Rosslare via New Ross & Wellington Bridge	Four services per day in both directions	Four services per day in both directions
371	Bus Eireann	New Ross to Wexford via Adamstown	One loop service on a Friday afternoon.	None
373	Bus Eireann	New Ros to Wexford via Fethard	One service on a Tuesday morning and afternoon.	None
388	TFI Local Link	Duncormick to Wexford	Ten-eleven services per day in both directions	Same as weekday
392	TFI Local Link	Wellington Bridge to New Ross	Six services per day in either direction. Additional evening service on Friday.	Six services per day in either direction. Additional evening service on Saturday.
399	TFI Local Link	Hook Head – New Ross	Four-Five services per day in either direction. Additional two evening services on Friday	Four-Five services per day in either direction. Additional two evening services on Saturday

Source: bustimes.org, transportforireland.ie, busireann.ie, locallinkwexford.ie

There is no rail provision within the LIA. The closest railway station to the Proposed Project is Waterford (Plunkett) Station, located 28km away.

6.4.3 Economic Activity

6.4.3.1 Employment

The table below shows key employment indicators. The proportion of the employed working age population in the LIA (69%) is in line with that of County Wexford (67%), Southeast Ireland, and Ireland as a whole (both 69%). At 6%, the LIA has a lower proportion of unemployed people compared to County Wexford (10%), however it is largely in line with the regional (9%) and national (8%) proportions.

¹⁹ Central Statistics Office (2025). Census of Agriculture 2020. Available at: [Agricultural Statistics by Electoral Division Census of Agriculture 2020 Detailed Results - Central Statistics Office](#)

Table 6.11: Employment indicators

	Working age population	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)
LIA	578	69%	6%
County Wexford	104,034	67%	10%
Southeast Ireland	292,264	69%	9%
Ireland	3,360,537	69%	8%

Source: CSO Census, 2022

6.4.3.2 Employment sectors

The table below shows the key employment sectors in the LIA as well as wider comparison areas.

- The share of people working in agriculture, forestry and fishing is significantly higher in the LIA (9%) compared with the national average (4%), however it is in line with that of County Wexford (6%) and the Southeast region (7%).
- The proportion of people within the LIA working in 'Other' sectors (24%) is slightly lower in comparison to the Wexford (16%), regional (15%), and national (16%) shares. This suggests there is a lower availability of employment in sectors such as hospitality, education, the arts, and non-profits in the LIA when compared to wider areas.
- For all other sectors, the share of people working within all other sectors in the LIA is in line with proportions across the county, the region, and the country.

Table 6.12: Employment sectors

Sectors	LIA		County Wexford		Southeast Ireland		Ireland	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	38	9%	4,217	6%	18,332	7%	82,228	4%
Building and construction	34	8%	5,282	8%	17,709	7%	134,482	6%
Manufacturing industries	49	12%	8,361	12%	38,524	14%	273,102	12%
Commerce and trade	86	21%	16,150	23%	58,752	22%	552,642	24%
Transport and communications	25	6%	4,513	6%	15,947	6%	212,383	9%
Public administration	19	5%	3,936	6%	15,104	6%	131,639	6%
Professional services	98	24%	15,816	23%	65,924	24%	568,105	24%
Other	52	13%	11,210	16%	40,718	15%	365,716	16%

Source: CSO Census, 2022

6.4.4 Tourism and Recreation

There is one potential tourist attraction located within 500 meters of the Proposed Project, which are the ruins of a church by Saint Colman's Well, situated 67m from the Area A red line boundary and 80m from the Area B red line boundary.

Slightly further from the LIA, there are further tourist attractions:

- Carnagh burial ground, located 780m north-east of the cable route boundary;
- The John F. Kennedy Memorial Park, located 4.1km west of the Proposed Project.

6.4.5 Human Health

6.4.5.1 Health indicators

Table 6.13: Share of population with a disability

Persons with a disability	LIA		County Wexford		South East Ireland		Ireland	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	221	24%	39507	24%	144085	32%	1109557	22%

Source: CSO Census, 2022

Census 2022 data suggests that almost a quarter (24%) of the LIA population is disabled, which is in line with the proportions for County Wexford (24%) and Ireland as a whole (22%). The share of people with a disability represents almost a third (32%) of the population in the Southeast region, which is significantly higher than that of other comparison areas.

Table 6.14: General health of population

	LIA	County Wexford	South East Ireland	Ireland
Very good	57%	53%	53%	53%
Good	29%	30%	30%	30%
Fair	8%	10%	9%	9%
Bad	1%	2%	2%	1%
Very Bad	1%	0%	0%	0%
Not stated	4%	5%	6%	7%

Source: CSO Census, 2022

In terms of general health, 86% of the LIA population reported having 'good' or 'very good' health in the 2022 Census. This is higher than the proportions across County Wexford, Southeast Ireland, and Ireland which are all 83%.

6.4.5.2 Air quality management

As outlined in Chapter 10 (Air Quality), there are no localised air quality issues in the area. Overall, the annual mean concentrations measured at monitoring sites in proximity to the Proposed Project indicate a decrease of all relevant pollutants between 2019 and 2023.

6.4.5.3 Noise environment

As set out in Chapter 11 (Noise and Vibration), a total of six noise sensitive locations have been identified in proximity to the Proposed Project. These locations include residential receptors.

6.4.5.4 Landscape amenity

As set out in Chapter 12 (Landscape), the local area in which the Proposed Project is located is described as 'gently undulating lands' with agricultural lands that 'tend to be characterised by views across larger fields as a result of the generally low well-trimmed hedges.' The overarching landscape unit hosts principal towns (except where transected by River Valleys) and major infrastructure such as the main roads and railways.

6.5 Likely Significant Effects

In accordance with the EPA Guidelines and methodology as described in Section 6.3, the following sections provide an overview of the likely significant effects, within the LIA, on:

- Population demographics and settlement patterns;
- Land use and social considerations, including effects on land requirements, accessibility, and general amenity;
- Economic activity e.g. employment, tourism;
- Community facilities and amenities, including cultural and recreational receptors;
- Human health, considered with reference to, and interactions with, other environmental receptors contained in corresponding chapters such as air quality, noise, and traffic.

6.5.1 Do nothing

In the event that the Proposed Project does not proceed, the 'do nothing' effect would be that effects on the local population and LIA would not occur. The positive benefits of generating renewable energy solar will not be realised if the Proposed Project is not developed.

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6.5.2 Construction Phase

This section describes and assesses the potential construction phase population and human health effects of the Proposed Project.

Table 6.15: Effects during the construction phase

Source	Sensitivity of receptor	Description of impact	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Population				
<i>Changes in resident population</i>	Due to the nature of the project, the Proposed Project will not lead to an increase in the resident population of the area.			
Land use and social considerations				
The Proposed Project will not require land from community facilities, non-agricultural businesses, tourist attractions of public open spaces during the construction period				
<i>Permanent land requirements</i>	Low – All land for the Proposed Project requires buy-in and consent for a 40-year lease in line with the operational lifespan of the Proposed Project.	The Proposed Project will permanently require approximately 121.5 hectares of agricultural land across the LIA.	Negligible – The land required permanently represents a small proportion of the land in the LIA.	Not significant
Economic activity				
<i>Temporary changes in employment</i>	Low - The construction workforce is likely to be sourced from across the County. In County Wexford the proportion of the working age population which is unemployed is slightly lower than national proportions. The sensitivity of the receptor (unemployment) is therefore considered to be low.	During construction of the Proposed Project, there will be a beneficial impact on the economy through the provision of employment opportunities – via both new and existing construction contracts. This is likely to be beneficial in terms of local employment opportunities associated with direct employment from construction activities, as well as for local businesses through indirect and induced expenditure. It is expected that the number of construction workers required will vary throughout the duration of the construction phase but will peak at approximately 150 persons. A number of these jobs could be expected to be filled by residents of County Wexford. However, it is assumed that the majority of construction jobs would be accessed by people (i.e. both	Negligible - The proportion of construction workers and/or contracts that would be sourced locally is currently unknown. However, if it assumed that all jobs are new and sourced from the pool of County Wexford residents who are unemployed, the change in unemployment would equate to approximately 1% for a period of up to 26 months. The magnitude of impact is minor as only a small proportion of the population will be impacted.	Not Significant

Source	Sensitivity of receptor	Description of impact	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
employed as well as unemployed) from across the wider Southeast region.				
Human health				
Temporary changes in health and wellbeing due to changes in the local environment / neighbourhood quality	The construction of the Proposed Project may result in temporary environmental changes (such as noise and dust) for communities in proximity to construction activities – resulting in an overall change in neighbourhood quality for these communities. Changes in neighbourhood quality result from a combination of significant residual (post-mitigation) effects reported by other assessment topics – specifically noise and vibration, air, landscape and road and traffic effects. For a neighbourhood effect to be identified, at least two significant residual effects must combine in the same location. No significant residual effects have been reported in relevant environmental chapters, therefore there is no effect on health and wellbeing anticipated during the construction phase of the Proposed Project.			
Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	EMF is produced whenever electricity is present. Electromagnetic interference (EMI) is disturbance that affects an electrical system due to magnetic and electric fields, electromagnetic induction, conduction or electromagnetic radiation emitted from an external source. High voltage electrical equipment creates EMF, which can potentially have implications for human health and may cause EMI to other electrical/electronic equipment (e.g., communications) or infrastructure (e.g. power lines). The Proposed Project includes new electrical equipment. EMF limits are specified in the EU Directive 2013/35/EU Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) limits, published in 2013 and enforced in the Ireland by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, EPA and the Health & Safety Authority – all of which reference the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines. Equipment used during construction of the Proposed Project will also comply with applicable health and safety standards for EMF. As this equipment will be installed, operated and maintained correctly, levels of electromagnetic emissions are unlikely to exceed the acceptable limits for workers or the public, or to cause EMI. Power supplies used for construction are generally insufficient to cause any significant EMI. Consequently, there will be no significant health effects associated with the construction of the Proposed Project.			
Temporary changes in social cohesion	Low – Welfare facilities will be provided onsite for construction workers. As such, the presence of the construction workforce is unlikely to put considerable pressure on resources within nearby settlements. Daily activities of residents within the LIA will therefore be limited a little.	During the day, the workforce will be present on construction sites and compounds. The construction workforce will peak at approximately 150 persons. The presence of construction workers is likely to be noticeable for those living in the area.	Minor - Construction workers are likely to congregate in places of social cohesion that are local to the LIA. The severity predominantly relates to a minor change in the make-up of the LIA, and the impact will be rapidly reversed.	Not significant
Temporary disruption to community receptors as a result of road closures	High - The sensitivity of community receptors within the study area is considered to be high as they are accessed frequently by users.	The local community may experience temporary disruption in access to community receptors during construction of the Proposed Project due to road closures. In Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport) it is assessed that, at worst, any closures would typically add a maximum of thirteen minutes onto journeys.	Moderate - While the duration of impact is very short-term (maximum of seven weeks for the longest road closure) and will remain open for local and emergency access, community disruption for a moderate number of receptors is anticipated. As	Moderate adverse, significant

Source	Sensitivity of receptor	Description of impact	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
		The following roads have been identified as being impacted by closures:	such, the magnitude of impact is therefore assessed as moderate.	
		- L4030 between the L40232 and the L4023; - L40232 between the L4030 and Array Area A access; - L80591; - L4030 - Array A Link; and - L4030 - Array A to Array B Link.		
Temporary changes in NMU amenity due to increased HGV traffic	High – The sensitivity of NMUs is considered to be high as pedestrians are a vulnerable receptor.	As highlighted in Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport), the amenity of a pedestrian's journey may be impacted due to an increase in HGV traffic on local roads. For example, the Proposed Project is predicted to generate an increase of up to 7600% of HGVs on the Unclassified Road between L4030 Rathumney to L4030 Nash in year 2027. Such increases are likely to impact the 'relative pleasantness of a journey' for NMUs during this time.	Major – As the presence of HGV traffic throughout the construction period impacts the quality and integrity of the receptor due to its impact on NMU amenity, the magnitude has been assessed as major.	Major adverse, significant

6.5.3 Operation and Maintenance Phase

This section describes and assesses the potential population and human health effects of the Proposed Project during the operation and maintenance phase.

Table 6.16: Effects during the Operation and Maintenance Phase

Source	Sensitivity of receptor	Description of impact	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Population				
		Due to the nature of the project, the Proposed Project will not lead to an increase in the resident population of the area.		
Land use and social considerations				
		The permanent requirement for land will take place during the construction phase. As such, these have been identified and assessed in Table 6.15 above. No further impacts to land use and social considerations have been identified during the operation and maintenance phase.		
Economic activity				

Source	Sensitivity of receptor	Description of impact	Magnitude of impact	Significance of effect
Permanent employment	Low - The sensitivity of the LIA is low due to the proportion of the working age population which is unemployed being slightly lower than national proportions.	Throughout operation, the Proposed Project is likely to generate a small amount of employment. However, both the Solar Farm and GIS and AIS substations are expected to be operated remotely. Visits to the sites by security and maintenance personnel are anticipated to occur on average once or twice every six months.	Indiscernible – As it is currently unknown if employment will be sourced locally, the magnitude of impact is assessed as negligible and indiscernible at the County level.	Not significant
Human health				
Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)	There will be no significant health effects associated with EMF in the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project will operate in accordance with EMF health and safety standards.			

6.5.4 Decommissioning Phase

Subject to the granting of statutory approval, the Shelburne Energy Farm and grid connections will form part of the national electrical grid infrastructure. The design life of the PV Solar Farm and BESS is 30 years and 20 years respectively, where the planning permission for the operational life span of the Proposed Project overall is 40 years. The Shelburne Energy Farm is to be decommissioned in line with the Decommissioning and Land Restoration Plan, contained in Appendix 3.1, Volume 3 of this EIAR. It is expected that the 220kV Grid Connection will remain a permanent part of the national electricity transmission network and will be refurbished and / or redeveloped as required rather than be decommissioned.

6.6 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects consider the potential effects of the Proposed Project in combination with the potential effects of other existing or approved developments within the surrounding area.

In addition to the Proposed Project, Chapter 3 of this EIAR provides other developments in the vicinity of the Proposed Project which have the potential to result in cumulative impacts.

6.6.1 Land Uses and Social Considerations

The Proposed Project will permanently require approximately 121.5 hectares of agricultural land across the LIA, however this has not been deemed as significant. The nearest other approved or existing developments are 5km away from the Proposed Project, meaning cumulative land take effects are unlikely to arise.

6.6.2 Economic Activity

The construction and operation of the Proposed Project is expected to generate employment. It is not possible to estimate the employment impacts of each cumulative scheme due to a lack of accessible information on employment required for the delivery of other projects. However, it is likely that there would be a beneficial temporary effect on the construction employment sector due to a cumulation of construction works. Longer term beneficial effects may also arise throughout operation.

6.6.3 Human Health

6.6.3.1 Neighbourhood quality

Whilst Chapter 11 (Noise and vibration) has highlighted that the potential extension of the BESS battery storage may have a cumulative noise impact on the receptors nearest to the compound, no cumulative effects have been identified in the Air Quality or Landscape (Chapters 10 and 12). As such, no cumulative neighbourhood quality effects are anticipated as a result of other developments.

6.6.3.2 Electromagnetic Fields

The proposed development and cumulative schemes will operate in accordance with limits set by the EU Directive 2013/35/EU Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) and International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). As such, it is assumed that there will be no significant cumulative health effects associated with EMF during the construction and operation of the proposed and cumulative schemes.

6.6.3.3 Traffic disruption

According to Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport), if the construction traffic generated by Proposed Project coincides with the construction phases of other developments and remains unmitigated, there will at worst be a major effect upon community receptors, resulting in a significant cumulative effect. Similarly, if road closures associated with the Proposed Project and other developments remain unmitigated, at worst there would be a moderate adverse effect, which would be significant to local community receptors.

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6.7 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

The Proposed Project has been designed, as far as possible, to minimise effects on population and human health. Appropriate mitigation options have been identified.

6.7.1 Construction phase

The following mitigations relevant to the population and human health assessment are proposed during the construction phase:

- To manage changes in access in the construction phase, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Appendix 5.1, has been developed to communicate planned activities and minimise disruption to stakeholders that may be affected by construction activities. This is included in the application documentation.
- A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been developed as part of the CEMP, to optimise the efficiency and safety of all traffic activities generated by the Proposed Project.
- Construction phase works will take place between the hours of 07:00-19:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00-14:00 Saturday, subject to agreement with Wexford County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála respectively.
- To address risks of exposure to radon, workplace radon tests will be carried out in areas. Water quality testing will be undertaken pre-construction, during construction and post-construction for any identified drinking water abstraction sources which may be impacted by construction activities.
- The CEMP includes best practice mitigation to minimise air quality and noise impacts associated with construction vehicles and the construction and operation of the Proposed Project.
- Vegetation removal required as part of site preparation, and any removal of hedgerow, trees or scrub will take place outside of the bird nesting season so as to minimise disruption to local biodiversity, and ensuing effects on population and human health.
- Land clearance works will take place on a phased basis and with consideration of seasonal restrictions e.g. lambing season, harvest seasons, etc., if applicable.
- Where land is used temporarily, it will be reinstated to its previous state after construction.

6.7.2 Operation and maintenance phase

No specific mitigations relevant to the population and human health assessment are proposed during the operation and maintenance phase. In accordance with best practice (as set out in Chapter 10 (Air Quality)) emissions will be minimised at source to reduce exposure of effects of operations on receptors.

6.8 Residual Effects

There are no significant residual population and human health effects predicted during the construction and operational phases. It is acknowledged that inconvenience will be caused in

some areas due to road closures and the presence of HGV traffic, however, effects will be temporary and appropriately mitigated.

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