

2 HUMAN BEINGS – POPULATION & ECONOMIC

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 This chapter of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) presents an evaluation of the proposed development as set out in Chapter 6, **Volume 3B** of the EIS in relation to population and socio-economic issues. The information contained within this chapter relates to the Meath Study Area (MSA) as described in Chapter 5, **Volume 3B** of the EIS.
- 2 Chapter 6, **Volume 3B** of the EIS describes the full nature and extent of the proposed development, including elements of the overhead line (OHL) design and the towers as well as works to the existing Woodland Substation. It provides a factual description, on a section by section basis, of the entire line route. The proposed line route is described in that chapter using townlands and tower numbers as a reference. The principal construction works proposed as part of the development are set out in Chapter 7, **Volume 3B** of the EIS.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Scope of the Evaluation

- 3 This section of the EIS has been prepared in accordance with relevant EU and Irish legislation and guidance, including the requirements of Annex IV of the EIA Directive (which requires a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected, including population) and in accordance with Schedule 6 of the *Planning and Development Regulations, 2001* (as amended) and conforms to the relevant requirements as specified therein. The scope of the evaluation is based on a review of legislation, guidance documents, other EISs, feedback from public consultation, consultation with prescribed bodies, consultation with An Bord Pleanála (the Board) and on a consideration of the likelihood for significant impacts arising, having regard to the nature of the receiving environment and the nature and extent of the proposed development.
- 4 The scoping opinion received from the Board (Refer to Appendix 1.3, **Volume 3B Appendices** of the EIS) identified the following issues as being relevant to this chapter of the EIS:
 - The identification of potential impacts on settlement patterns along the route, including the identification of existing dwellings, community facilities or other public buildings such as schools, healthcare facilities, etc. and any extant planning permissions for such development;

- An assessment of the likely impacts on the linguistic or cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht area through which the route passes, or on the promotion of Irish as the community language;
- Any implications for, or impacts on, the local regional or national economy;
- An assessment of the likely effects on the amenity / tourism value of the area, including designated tourist routes (e.g. the Monaghan Way) and possible impacts on fishing and fisheries tourism; and
- Address impacts on the potential future use of disused railways.

- 5 Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the population aspects of the existing environment and the potential for impacts on population, settlement, employment and economic opportunities as a result of the proposed development in the MSA.
- 6 An evaluation of tourism and amenity issues in the MSA is described in **Chapter 4** of this volume of the EIS.
- 7 Indirect impacts to employment locations may occur during the construction phase arising mainly from temporary traffic disruptions. These impacts have been considered and mitigation measures, where required, are outlined in **Chapter 13**, of this volume of the EIS. Impacts from maintenance traffic during operation will be negligible and further consideration of these impacts with regard to employment locations has therefore been scoped out of this evaluation.
- 8 The evaluation primarily concentrates on the preferred corridor as identified in the *Final Re-evaluation Report (FRR)* (April 2013) (Refer to Appendix 1.1, **Volume 3B Appendices** of the EIS) within which the proposed overhead line (OHL) is situated but does take account of the wider socio-economic environment outside of this corridor.

2.2.2 Information Sources

- 9 The information sources used to prepare this chapter include the following:
- Census and employment information published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) 2002 - 2014;
 - Census information published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2002 - 2014;
 - Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) mapping and aerial photography;

- National and Regional Development Plans;
- *Meath County Development Plan 2013 -2019*;
- Local information and relevant websites (e.g. Meath County Council, Greater Dublin Regional Authority, OSI);
- Information provided as a result of project consultation and scoping; and
- Site visits to the MSA.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

10 The proposed development primarily involves the erection of an overhead electricity line on lattice steel support structures. The types of issues which OHL developments of this nature typically raise in relation to this environmental topic include the potential for impacts on population, settlement, employment and economic opportunities. In that regard, the evaluation considers the construction, operational and decommissioning aspects of the proposed development.

2.4 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

2.4.1 Population

2.4.1.1 Population and Structure Change

11 In terms of the county, region and the state, population structure and change is more strongly influenced by migration and emigration rates than by birth and death rates. The mid to late 1980s in Ireland was a period of heavy population outflow, mainly due to the poor economic and employment situation in the country at that time. Since 1990 there has been significant migration into the country with resulting population growth, mainly due to the improved economic performance of the Irish economy. **Table 2.1** provides an analysis of population change for the island of Ireland and at national, regional and local levels since 2002.

Table 2.1: Population Structure and Change at National, Regional and Local Level

Area	2002	2006	% Change 2002 -2006	2011	% Change 2006-2011
Ireland (incl. NI)	5,603,030	5,984,925	6.8	6,399,152	6.9
Ireland	3,917,203	4,239,848	8.2	4,588,252	8.2
GDA Region ²	1,535,446	1,662,536	8.2	1,804,156	8.5
County Meath	134,005	162,831	21.5	184,135	13.1

(Source: Census of Population Ireland, 2002, 2006, 2011 and NI Census 2001 and 2011)

- 12 The population statistics in **Table 2.1** show significant increases in population between 2002 and 2011. The most recent population estimates (April 2014) published by the CSO³ and the NISRA indicate that despite continuing high levels of emigration, population is still increasing in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, although at a lower rate than previously. Population projections for Ireland up to 2046 anticipate a population of approximately five million under the most pessimistic scenario and over 6.7 million under the most optimistic scenario. Population projections for Northern Ireland up to 2034 anticipate a population of approximately two million⁴.
- 13 As detailed in **Table 2.1**, the Greater Dublin Area (which includes Dublin City and the administrative areas of Fingal, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown as well as counties Meath, Wicklow and Kildare) shows significant population growth between 2002 and 2011 which is in excess of population growth at national levels. Significant population pressures have been exerted on certain parts of the GDA particularly those areas which are within close commuting distance of Dublin; this includes large areas of east and south Meath. In the case of the GDA, population levels specified in the *Greater Dublin Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022* are projected to be in excess of 2 million by the year 2022.
- 14 County Meath has experienced significant population growth over the last fifteen years, with the population increasing from 109,732 in 1996 to 184,135 in 2011. This equates to an increase of 68%. Within the GDA, Meath experienced the second greatest rate of population increase between 2002 and 2011 at 37%.
- 15 Within County Meath an analysis of the population data indicates that population trends are as follows:
- Substantial growth has occurred in eastern and southern towns which are located on high quality public transport corridors linked to Dublin;

² County Meath lies within the Mid East Region. For regional planning purposes the Mid East Region is combined with Dublin City and County in the *Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010–2022*. Population statistics are therefore stated for the GDA.

³ www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2013/poplabfor2016_2046.pdf.

⁴ www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/population/projections/Northern%20Ireland%20Population%20Projections%202010%20-%20Statistics%20Press%20Notice.pdf.

- The population of Meath is relatively young compared to the national average with a significant number of people in the 30–44 age cohort;
- Population growth has occurred in rural areas with a significant increase in rural dwellings; and
- Rural areas in the north and west of the county have limited or negative population growth.

- 16 The trends reflect trends being experienced in counties surrounding Dublin City and County.
- 17 The *Meath County Development Plan 2013–2019* (the Meath CDP) forecasts a population increase for County Meath to 210,000 by 2022.
- 18 It is evident from population statistics published by the CSO that County Meath has experienced significant population growth since 2002, and are forecasting further but more limited growth up to 2022. It is also evident that significant growth has taken place in rural areas outside the main settlements.

2.4.1.2 Settlement Patterns

- 19 Navan and Drogheda Environs are the largest urban settlements in the county; however Drogheda Environs lie outside the immediate vicinity of the MSA where the proposed development is located.
- 20 Of most relevance to the proposed development are the population numbers and structure relating to settlements in County Meath in the vicinity of the proposed development. The main urban settlements that lie within the local and wider vicinities of the proposed development are profiled below. Urban settlements generally include a range of residential, commercial and community facilities. Smaller villages typically include a school, church, local shops as well as other community and recreational facilities.
- 21 As significant population growth has also occurred outside the main urban areas, a number of smaller settlements are also identified.
- 22 Outside of identified settlements, it is recognised that other more dispersed settlements, often comprising of groups of individual dwellings (termed Graigs in the Meath CDP) occur frequently in the vicinity of the proposed development.

- 23 Single (one-off) dwellings, outside groups of dwellings, are also a significant feature of settlement patterns in County Meath. These are both dispersed, and in clustered or linear patterns, throughout the receiving environment of the proposed development.
- 24 Planning applications in the vicinity of the proposed development are monitored on a regular basis with the aim of ensuring conflicts do not arise. The types of planning applications that typically occur in the vicinity of the proposed development primarily comprise discrete proposals for rural dwellings and agricultural developments. **Table 2.2** identifies extant planning permissions within approximately 200 metres of the proposed development (measured from the centreline).

Table 2.2: Extant Planning Permissions

County	Townland	Register Reference and Brief Description of Development	Decision Date / Decision due Date	Distance to North-South 400 kV (measured from the centreline)
Meath	Castlemartin Between Towers 310 and 311	Reg. Ref. KA101277 - consists of a dwelling, domestic garage & horse stables. This is not constructed as confirmed from planning check Feb 2015.	05.01.2011	160m (approx.)
Meath	Neillstown Between Towers 327 and 328	Reg. Ref. NA120940 - consists of a storey and half type dwelling & garage.	03.07.2013	110m (approx.)
Meath	Betaghstown (ED Ardblackan) Between Towers 328 and 329	Reg. Ref. NA900568 / NA130660 - consists of a two storey dwelling & garage. Extension to planning to 09/2019.	04.07.2013	170m (approx.)
Meath	Balbrigh Between Towers 350 and 351	Reg. Ref. NA101302 - consists of a single storey dwelling & detached garage, Demolition of existing cottage.	02.06.2011	60m (approx.)
Meath	Trubley Between Towers 357 and 358	Reg. Ref. TA120157 - consists of two no. two-storey houses and associated works.	28.08.2012	60m (approx.)
Meath	Creroge Between Towers 368 and Towers 369	Reg. Ref. TA70570 / TA120768 - consists of demolition of existing and construction of two storey dwelling and garage. Extension to planning to 12/2017. This is not constructed as confirmed from planning check Feb 2015.	20.11.2007	80m (approx.)

(Planning application data as at end March 2015)

Navan (town centre located approximately 5km from the line route)

- 25 Navan town centre is located approximately 5km from the line route and its outskirts are some 2.8km from the line route. Navan is bypassed to the west by the M3 Motorway, with the proposed development located further west of the M3. Navan is identified as a large growth town in the Meath CDP. It has grown significantly over each census with unprecedented growth between 2002 and 2011 which was amongst the highest experienced by any urban centre in the country. The population of Navan and Environs increased by almost 15% between Census 2006 and 2011, to its current population of 28,559. It is planned that Navan will grow in the longer term (2022) to a population of 50,000 persons.
- 26 Outside of the town, there is a much larger population of approximately 16,000 persons living in the surrounding Navan Rural Electoral Division (NRED). The NRED includes the District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) of; Ardblackan, Ardmulchan, Bective, Castletown, Donaghpatrick, Kentstown, Navan Rural (part), Painestown, Rathkenny, Slane, Stackallen and Tara. Navan as a large growth town is planning to accommodate significant new investment in transport, in economic and commercial activity and in housing. It is intended that Navan will act as an important self-sustaining regional economic driver for the GDA, capitalising on its international connectivity and high quality connections to Dublin City, whilst also supporting and servicing a wider local economy.
- 27 Of the DEDs referred to above, the line route passes through the DEDs of; Bective, Castletown and Donaghpatrick.

Dunshaughlin (town centre located approximately 6.4 km from the line route)

- 28 The town centre of Dunshaughlin is located approximately 6.4km from the line route with its outskirts located approximately 5.6km from the line route. Dunshaughlin is bypassed to the west by the M3 Motorway, with the proposed development located further west of the M3. Dunshaughlin is identified as a moderate sustainable growth town in the Meath CDP. Dunshaughlin is approximately 12km from Dunboyne to the south and approximately 20km from Navan to the north. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Dunshaughlin Town was recorded at 3,908, an increase of 15% on the 2006 figure. Outside of the town there is a much larger population of approximately 44,300 additional people living in the surrounding Dunshaughlin Rural Electoral Division (DRED). The DRED includes the DEDs of; Culmullin, Donaghmore, Dunboyne, Kilbrew, Killeen, Kilmessan, Kilmore, Rathfeigh, Ratoath, Rodanstown and Skreen.
- 29 Dunshaughlin as a moderate sustainable growth town is planning to develop in a self-sufficient manner and levels of growth will be balanced to ensure that any increase in population will be in tandem with employment opportunities. The town needs to provide a full range of services

adequate to meet local needs, both within the town and in the surrounding rural catchment area, but should not generate long distance travel patterns.

- 30 Of the DEDs referred to above, the line route passes through the DEDs of; Culmullin and Kilmessan.

Trim (town centre located approximately 5.5km from the line route)

- 31 Trim is also identified as a moderate growth town in the Meath CDP. The town centre of Trim is approximately 5.5km to the line route and its outskirts are approximately 3.8km to the line route. Trim town is located 14.5km south-west of Navan. It is one of the largest urban centres serving the southwest of the county. Trim is a main service centre, providing for the town's population and a large hinterland. Trim experienced steady growth at each census from 1961 to 2006. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Trim was recorded at 1,441, an increase of almost 5% on the 2006 figure. Outside of the town there is a much larger population of approximately 31,000 additional people living in the surrounding Trim Rural Electoral Division (TRED) - the TRED includes the DEDs of; Ardnamullan, Baile Atha Bui, Ballyboggan, Ballyconnell, Castlejordan, Castlerickard, Cloghbrack, Clonmacduff, Gallow, Galtrim, Grennanstown, Hill of Down, Innfield, Cill Bride, Kilcooly, Kildalky, Killaconnigan, Killyon, Laracor, Rahinstown, Rathmoylan, An RathMhor and Summerhill.

- 32 Of the DEDs referred to above, the line route passes through the DEDs of Galtrim and Kilcooly.

Nobber (located approximately 1.7km from the line route)

- 33 Nobber is identified as a key village in the Meath CDP. Nobber is located along the R162 Regional Route, from Navan to Kingscourt in County Cavan. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Nobber was recorded at 357, an increase of almost 53% on the 2006 figure. The population of Nobber DED, which includes the village, was recorded at 748 in the 2011 census. Key villages tend to be located more remotely from major towns or centres and play a key local role for services for the local rural and adjoining village populations. In effect, they operate as rural service centres; a vital role to sustain rural communities.

Summerhill (located approximately 4.3km from the line route)

- 34 Summerhill is similarly identified as a key village in the Meath CDP. Summerhill is situated in the south western part of County Meath, approximately 40km from Dublin, 11km from Trim and 29km from Navan. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Summerhill was recorded at 832, an increase of 4% on the 2006 figure. The population of Summerhill DED, which includes the town, was recorded at 1,299 in the 2011 census.

Kilmainhamwood (located approximately 650m from the line route)

- 35 Kilmainhamwood is similarly identified as a key village in the Meath CDP. Kilmainhamwood is located in the northern part of County Meath, 16km from Kells, 7km from Kingscourt and 6km from Nobber. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Kilmainhamwood DED was recorded at 761, an increase of 2.7% on the 2006 figure.

Kilmessan (located approximately 2.5km from the line route)

- 36 Kilmessan is similarly identified as a key village in the Meath CDP. Kilmessan is located approximately 13km from Navan and 10km from Trim and Dunshaughlin. In CSO data for 2011, the population of Kilmessan DED was recorded at 1,388, an increase of 19% on the 2006 figure.

Gaeltacht Area (OHL passes through this area)

- 37 The Meath Gaeltacht is the smallest Gaeltacht area in Ireland and consists of two adjacent villages of Ráth Cairn and Baile Ghib with a population recorded in Census 2011 of 1,771 which represents 1.7% of total Gaeltacht population in Ireland. As illustrated in **Figure 2.1**, it encompasses a geographical area of 44km², which represents 1% of total Gaeltacht land area (www.udaras.ie).

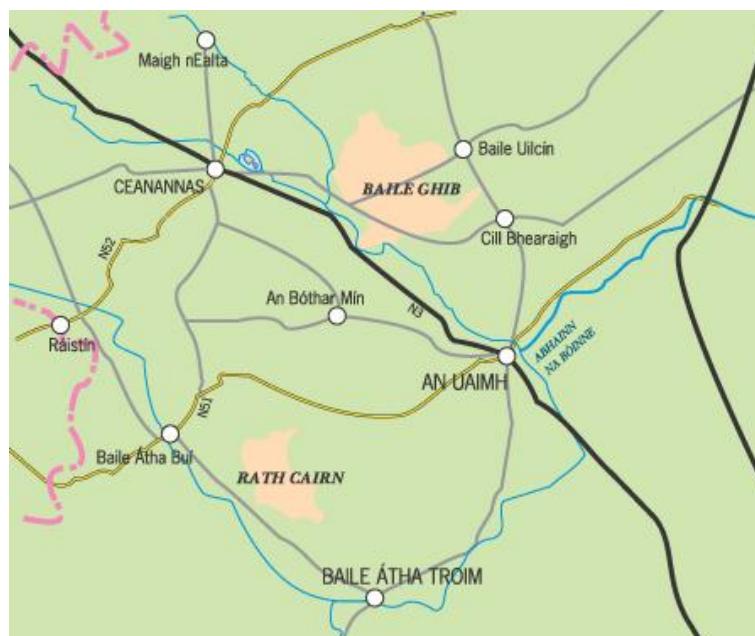


Figure 2.1: Map of Meath Gaeltacht

(Source: www.udaras.ie)

- 38 The Gaeltacht of Meath has a slightly different history than that of the country's other Irish speaking regions. The two Gaeltachtaí of Baile Ghib and Ráth Cairn are resettled communities, where the Irish government of the 1930s redistributed the estates of absentee landlords as small farm holdings to poor farmers from the Gaeltacht areas of Connemara, Mayo and Kerry. When the Irish farmers returned to the land in Meath, they brought with them their native language and culture which today is found the small Gaeltacht of Baile Ghib and Rath Cairn. In 2011 there were 190 people employed in a full-time capacity in Údarás na Gaeltachta client-companies in the Meath Gaeltacht.
- 39 It is a policy of the Meath CDP to ensure that all new developments in the Gaeltachtaí have a positive impact upon the use of Irish in the area. The OHL runs through the Meath Gaeltacht close to Baile Ghib.
- 40 Údarás na Gaeltachta did not make a submission in relation to the scoping of the EIS by An Bord Pleanála. The proposed development is a linear development which will pass through a small area of the Gaeltacht. It is not a type of development which has the characteristics to adversely impact on the linguistic or cultural heritage of the area through which it passes or on the promotion of Irish as the community language.

Other Settlements and District Electoral Divisions (DED)

- 41 The Meath CDP contains a further settlement tier and these are called Graigs or rural clusters. Graigs located within 5km of the proposed OHL include; Robinstown, Dunderry, Bohermeen, Oristown, Wilkinstown, Castletown, Drumree, Dunsany, Cortown, Tieveurcher and Batterstown.
- 42 Graigs are the smallest type of settlement identified in the Meath CDP. The character of these settlement areas mirror the rural countryside but have scattered individual houses, with some clustering around one or more focal points. Focal points may include existing development around a cross road, a shop, church and a post office. Post offices and schools are provided in some of these centres and the centres serve an important community purpose.
- 43 Outside of Graigs, single (one-off) dwellings are also a feature of settlement patterns in County Meath.
- 44 In considering individual dwellings one of the design criteria for routing transmission infrastructure is to seek to maximise the distance from the OHL to such dwellings in so far as is practicable. An analysis of the dwellings along the route of the proposed OHL shows that, notwithstanding the extent of existing scattered one-off housing within the area of the proposed development, there are 23 dwellings within 100 metres (m) of the centre of the proposed MSA line route (not including the existing double circuit line). Nine dwellings are located within 100m

of the centreline of the existing Oldstreet to Woodland double circuit line. The location of these dwellings is shown on the planning drawings included in **Volume 1B** of the planning application documentation.

- 45 Community facilities, such as schools, churches and sports clubs, where large numbers of people frequently visit, are often found outside of the smaller settlements referred to previously. Similarly to dwellings, an additional design criterion seeks to maximise the distance to such facilities. In this regard the nearest community facilities which are located within 1km of the OHL are; Oristown Church (approximately 150m west of Towers 302 and 303) and Robinstown National School (approximately 570m north-east of Tower 349).
- 46 Other sections of this volume of the EIS evaluate the potential for specific environmental impacts on dwellings and community facilities arising from the construction and operation of the proposed OHL.

Conclusions

- 47 An increase in population has been experienced at a national and local level and in the towns and villages listed in this section. The predominance of scattered and clustered one-off housing in the MSA has ultimately influenced the positioning of the line, due to the aim of maximising separation distance between the proposed line and existing houses.

2.4.2 Employment and Economic Activity

2.4.2.1 Employment Profile

- 48 The economic base in County Meath is relatively diverse. While employment and economic activity is dispersed throughout County Meath, it is concentrated in the main primary and secondary economic growth towns of Navan, Drogheda, Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Kells and Trim. A significant proportion of the population commutes for work to areas outside the county. The economic strategy of the Meath CDP indicates that this strategy seeks to focus investment in Navan as the primary centre of economic development and employment in the county. This will rebalance the provision of jobs so that residents of Navan have access to opportunities for employment within easy distance from their homes, thereby reducing levels of commuting in the area as a whole. The strategy will ensure that the primacy of Navan is recognised, protected and promoted whilst ensuring that over time, a number of other major supporting employment centres are developed which provide balance to the location of employment opportunities across the county.

- 49 Within the primary and secondary economic growth towns, there are a number of key strategic, integrated and specialised employment centres which provide different types of functions. The main issues critical to the success of these major employment centres are continued availability of suitable land, improved public transport services to relieve congestion and reliance on the main inter urban road network and comprehensive infrastructure, to include piped water services, broadband and electrical power.
- 50 The economic condition of Ireland has dramatically changed in the last five years, with unemployment at its highest for many years, but recently according to a variety of CSO economic indicators and data sources the economy is beginning to show signs of improvement. While the economic downturn has resulted in an increase in unemployment throughout the country, GDA counties, including County Meath have suffered less than more peripheral counties due to their proximity to the major employment base of Dublin. **Table 2.3** presents an economic status profile for County Meath.

Table 2.3: Persons Aged 15 Years + Classified by Principal Economic Status, 2011

Economic Status	Meath		National
	Persons	%	%
Pop. aged 15+	137,669	-	-
Pop. aged 15+ in Labour Force	90,634	-	-
Employed	74,342	54.0	50.1
Looking for first job	1,137	0.8	1.0
Unemployed	15,155	11.1	10.8
Student	13,775	10.0	11.3
Home duties	14,108	10.2	9.4
Retired	13,959	10.2	12.7
Unable to work	4,839	3.5	4.4
Other	354	0.2	0.4

(Source: Census 2011 Profile 3 Employment, Occupations and Industry)

- 51 **Table 2.3** shows that the unemployment rate for County Meath in 2011 was marginally in excess of the national average.
- 52 More recent CSO data in relation to unemployment rates is available from the CSO live register data which is published monthly. Live register figures, published in September 2014 by the CSO indicate that the standardised unemployment rate (SUR) in the state was 11.1% compared to 14.3% in December 2011. The downward trend in unemployment is reflected in live register data for County Meath.

2.4.2.2 Economic Activity

- 53 Diversity of employment and economic activity is measured by the CSO by analysing employment sectors. The diversity of employment within County Meath is illustrated in **Table 2.4.**

Table 2.3: Persons Aged 15 Years + Classified by Employment Sector, 2011

Occupation	Meath		National
	Persons	%	%
Total persons in labour force	74,342	-	-
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3,693	5.0	5.2
Building and construction	4,670	6.1	5.0
Manufacturing and industry	7,064	9.5	10.7
Mining and quarrying	741	1.0	0.3
Wholesale and retail	11,671	15.7	14.7
Electricity, gas and water supply	977	1.3	0.7
Hotels and restaurants	3,460	4.7	5.7
Transport, storage and communications	6,958	9.4	5.4
Banking and financial services	3,944	5.3	5.2
Real estate, renting and business activities	9,003	12.1	10.2
Public service and community service	18,502	25.0	31.3
Others	3,654	4.9	5.6

(Source: Census 2011 Profile 3 Employment, Occupations and Industry)

- 54 A breakdown of those working within the broad employment groups, as outlined in **Table 2.4**, illustrates that although traditional sectors like agriculture, construction and manufacturing remain important, with approximately 20% of the working population being employed in these sectors they are not the dominant sectors. The service sector (including wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants, transport, storage and communications, banking and financial services, real estate, renting and business activities and public service and community) was the most important employer accounting for over 72% of the total working population; this is similar to the national average of 72%.
- 55 Employment trends anticipate a continued contraction in the traditional sectors of the economy. It is therefore the aim of the *Meath Economic Development Strategy*, as outlined in the Meath CDP, to diversify and increase employment and economic activity across a wide range of sectors including high technology manufacturing and research, international and nationally traded services, ICT, office based industry, food production and processing, public administration, healthcare, banking and retail. An improved economy will assist in achieving these aims.

- 56 The Meath CDP reflects the need to deliver regional investment and to create jobs and growth. The plan has an objective to facilitate energy infrastructure provision, including the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, so as to provide for the further physical and economic development of Meath.

2.5 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

2.5.1 Do Nothing

- 57 Population demographics will continue to change in future years irrespective of whether this proposed development proceeds. The proposed development will have no noticeable impact on population demographics as they are influenced by wider social and economic factors.
- 58 In terms of employment and economic activity, in order to continue to attract future investment (both domestic and foreign) to both Ireland and Northern Ireland, it is essential that the electricity grid is maintained and improved. For example, in the *Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure* published by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) on the 17th July, 2012 it is stated that:

“Our ability to rebuild the economy, deliver regional development, create jobs and growth and ensure the wellbeing of everyone as well as realising the economic potential of Ireland’s own renewable energy resources requires significant energy infrastructure.”

- 59 Doing nothing may eventually lead to a situation where an inadequate electricity grid becomes a barrier to further significant investment in employment and economic generating activities.

2.5.2 Construction Phase

- 60 The construction phase of the proposed development will not have any significant impacts on population demographics.
- 61 The construction phase within the Meath Gaeltacht is limited to a short section of OHL and it will be of short duration. It is not likely to adversely impact on the linguistic or cultural heritage of the area or on the promotion of Irish as the community language.
- 62 In economic terms, the capital value of the proposed interconnector is estimated to be in the region of €286 million. The project will involve the provision of direct and indirect jobs both on and off site, over the construction period. Employment will be created by the construction of the proposed development. Like other major construction projects, this project will be put out for competitive tender. Therefore, it is not possible to state what volume of construction materials,

services, etc. will be purchased locally. Materials such as concrete and other standard materials may be sourced locally where possible. Other more specialised electrical materials such as, steel towers, conductors, insulators and other line hardware will be sourced outside the MSA. Indirect employment and economic activity in local shops, restaurants and hotels is likely to be sustained as a result of the construction project and its employees being located in the MSA.

- 63 Therefore, during the construction phase of the proposed development there are likely to be some local positive economic benefits in the study area.

2.5.3 Operational Phase

- 64 In order to provide for future forecasted population growth on the island of Ireland, it is essential that the electricity grid is maintained and improved. When operational, the proposed development will contribute towards ensuring that the electricity grid is adequate to meet the needs of future forecast population levels throughout the island of Ireland.
- 65 When operational, the proposed development will contribute towards ensuring that the electricity grid is not a barrier to further significant investment in employment generating activities.
- 66 The proposed development is a linear development which will pass through a small area of the Meath Gaeltacht. It is not a type of development which has the characteristics to significantly adversely impact on the linguistic or cultural heritage of the Gaeltacht area through which it passes or on the promotion of Irish as the community language.

2.5.4 Decommissioning

- 67 The proposed development will become a permanent part of the transmission infrastructure. The expected lifespan of the development is in the region of 50 to 80 years. This will be achieved by routine maintenance and replacement of hardware as required. There are no plans for the decommissioning of the OHL. In the event that part of, or the entire proposed infrastructure is to be decommissioned, all towers, equipment and material to be decommissioned will be removed off site and the land reinstated. Impacts would be expected to be less than during the construction phase and would be of short term duration.

2.6 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 68 As the proposed development will have no noticeable impact on population demographics, no mitigation measures are required.
- 69 In terms of minimising the potential for impacts on the amenities of existing and future populations, the principal mitigation measure has been to maximise the distance between the proposed development and larger urban settlements, local villages, clustered settlements, individual one-off dwellings, schools, churches and community facilities.
- 70 Specific mitigation measures are included in other chapters of this EIS to mitigate potential adverse impacts which could arise during the construction and operational stage on human beings, arising from other environmental pathways.

2.7 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

- 71 Once the proposed development is operational, no significant residual impacts on population demographics and local economic activity are anticipated.

2.8 INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- 72 This chapter should be read in conjunction with other chapters of this volume of the EIS including; **Chapter 3** Human Beings – Land Use, **Chapter 4** Human Beings – Tourism and Amenity, **Chapter 5** Human Beings – EMF, **Chapter 9** Air – Noise and Vibration, **Chapter 10** Air – Quality and Climate, **Chapter 11** Landscape, **Chapter 12** Material Assets – General and **Chapter 13** Material Assets – Traffic, for a full understanding of the main interrelationships between these environmental topics.
- 73 Impacts to population are inherently interrelated to the various environmental topics evaluated in the EIS. All likely significant impacts in relation to population have been considered throughout the relevant chapters which detail the environmental topics. The main impacts on population arise from the following interrelationships:

- **Chapter 4** - Tourism and Amenity - There may be a slight reduction in tourism spend and associated economic activity in the immediate areas where the proposed development will be located.
- **Chapter 9** - Air – Noise & Vibration - There is the potential for noise impact to population in the form of impact to sensitive receptors such as private dwellings etc. in the construction phase and the operational phase. In the operational phase corona

noise has the potential to cause noise impact during inclement weather conditions. These impacts are addressed in the EIS and are not deemed to be significant.

- **Chapter 11 - Landscape** - There is a negative impact for dwellings that are located in close proximity to the proposed development which arises from the visual impacts.

2.9 CONCLUSIONS

- 74 An evaluation of the impact on community amenity has been undertaken through the identification of community facilities within 1km of the proposed development. The closest community facility is 150m from proposed development. In total there are two community facilities within the 1km corridor of the proposed development; Oristown Church and Robinstown National School. Additionally there are 23 dwellings within 100m of the centre of the proposed MSA line route (not including the existing double circuit line).
- 75 The likely impacts during both the construction and operational phases have been evaluated. The significance of these impacts is evaluated within the various specialist chapters of this EIS. Impacts to residential amenity are inherently interrelated to the various environmental topics evaluated in this EIS. All likely significant impacts in relation to residential amenity have been considered throughout these topics. The main impact on residential amenity which is likely to be significant arises from the visual impacts, where dwellings are located in close proximity to the proposed development. The extent and significance of such visual impacts is detailed in **Chapter 11** of this volume of the EIS.
- 76 It is considered that the landscape and visual resources of the wider MSA will not deteriorate to a significant degree and the overall impact upon population and residential amenity in general is therefore restricted to those receptors / areas within close proximity to the towers and OHL. The routing of the proposed OHL is considered to present the best overall option amongst the many alternatives considered throughout the development process.
- 77 There will be wider economic benefits arising from the improvements to the electricity grid in the island of Ireland; these will be experienced in both jurisdictions.