Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared in respect of the Proposed Development, which consists of the construction, commissioning, and operation of a c. 23.65-kilometre (km), 300-millimetre (mm) nominal bore (NB) underground steel gas transmission pipeline with a maximum operating pressure of 85 barg (the GNI 143 Ballykilleen Pipeline). The Proposed Development also includes associated ancillary fibre ducting, new offtake installation comprising a hot tap tie in location (the Kilwarden Offtake Installation) located in the townland of Kilwarden, Co. Meath, and new Above Ground Installation (the Ballykilleen AGI) located in the Edenderry Renewable Energy Complex located in Kilcumber, Co. Offaly. These elements collectively constitute the Proposed Development that is the subject of this EIAR.

The Proposed Development site comprises a linear pipeline route approximately 243.4 hectares (ha) (including associated construction works compounds) that traverses counties Meath and Offaly and the following townlands: Aghnagillagh, Ardnamullan, Ballyboggan, Ballynakill, Castlejordan, Clongall, Harristown, Kilwarden, Park, and Ticroghan (Co. Meath); and Ballykilleen, Clonmore, Drumcooly, Esker More, Lenamarran, Monasteroris, Mountwilson, Rathgreedan, Rathmore, Roosk, Shean, and Thornwell (Co. Offaly) (hereinafter referred to as the 'Site' or 'Proposed Development Site'). The location of the Proposed Development is shown in Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2.

The purpose of the proposed GNI 143 Ballykilleen Pipeline is to provide a gas connection to the Edenderry Renewable Energy Complex. The proposed GNI 143 Ballykilleen Pipeline will connect into the existing 750mm NB BGE77 pipeline (also known as Pipeline to the West (PTTW)) to achieve this. The Proposed Development is intended to facilitate the conversion of the existing Cushaling Peaker Plants located within the Edenderry Renewable Energy Complex from their current single fuel operation (liquid fuel, primarily hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO)) to dual fuel operation, with natural gas as the primary fuel. The Edenderry Renewable Energy Complex is required to operate in accordance with its Industrial Emissions (IE) Licence, reference P0482-04.

This EIAR is prepared in support of 2 no. individual applications being made: (1) to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) under Section 39A[1] of the Gas Act 1976, as amended, and (2) An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application under Section 182C(1) the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The 2 no. applications being made are broadly summarised as follows:

1. Application to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU):

The consent application relates solely to the underground GNI143 Ballykilleen Pipeline elements only. This consists of the connection to the existing BGE77 pipeline via a hot tap connection at the Kilwarden Offtake Installation and the GNI143 Ballykilleen Pipeline cross-country transmission pipeline terminating at the proposed Ballykilleen AGI.

2. Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP):

[1] Under Section 39A of the Gas Act 1976, as amended, any entity who wishes to construct such a pipeline must obtain a Section 39A Consent from the CRU. Processing a Section 39A Consent application involves assessing the applicant's financial and technical abilities to successfully and safely deliver the pipeline, as well as determining whether the pipeline project is likely to have any significant environmental impacts.

This application encompasses the entire Proposed Development, including the GNI 143 Ballykilleen Pipeline, associated ancillary fibre ducting, Kilwarden Offtake Installation, the Ballykilleen AGI, and all associated works.

In this chapter of the EIAR, the Proposed Development is introduced, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is summarised, and an overview is provided of the methodology used in preparing the EIAR. Details of the competency of the EIAR authors, the consultation undertaken, and any additional environmental reports and/or assessments required under legislation or EU Directives other than the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EU) are also outlined herein.

Further detail on the Proposed Development is provided in Chapter 2: Description of Proposed Development. Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the lifecycle of the project, including reference to the engineering drawings, plans, reports, and other relevant documents in order to define the Proposed Development. This EIAR should be read in conjunction with full application documentation, supporting documents and appendices.

This EIAR has been prepared in accordance with the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296/2018) (as amended), which transpose the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (2014/52/EU).

This chapter is supported by figures contained in Volume 4 of this EIAR. While selected figures may be reproduced within the chapter for ease of reference, the full size and quality of those figures are provided in Volume 4. Annotated mark ups, diagrams and photographic records are excluded, as these are provided for illustrative or contextual purposes only and are not replicated at full presentation quality.

The relevant Volume 4 figures to this chapter include:

- Figure 1-1 Proposed Development Site Location National Reference
- Figure 1-2 Proposed Development Site Location County Reference

Figure 1-1 Proposed Development Site Location National Reference

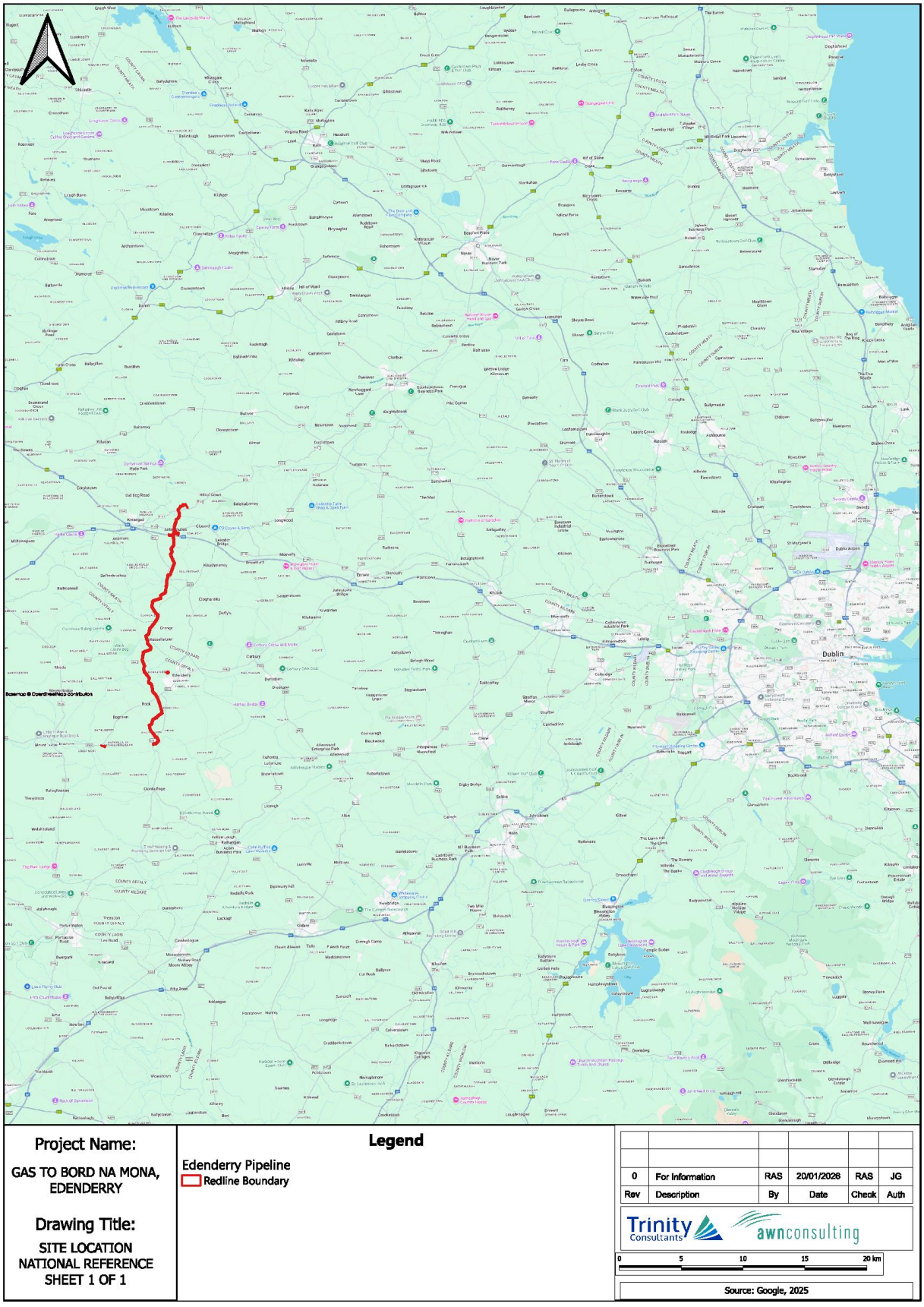
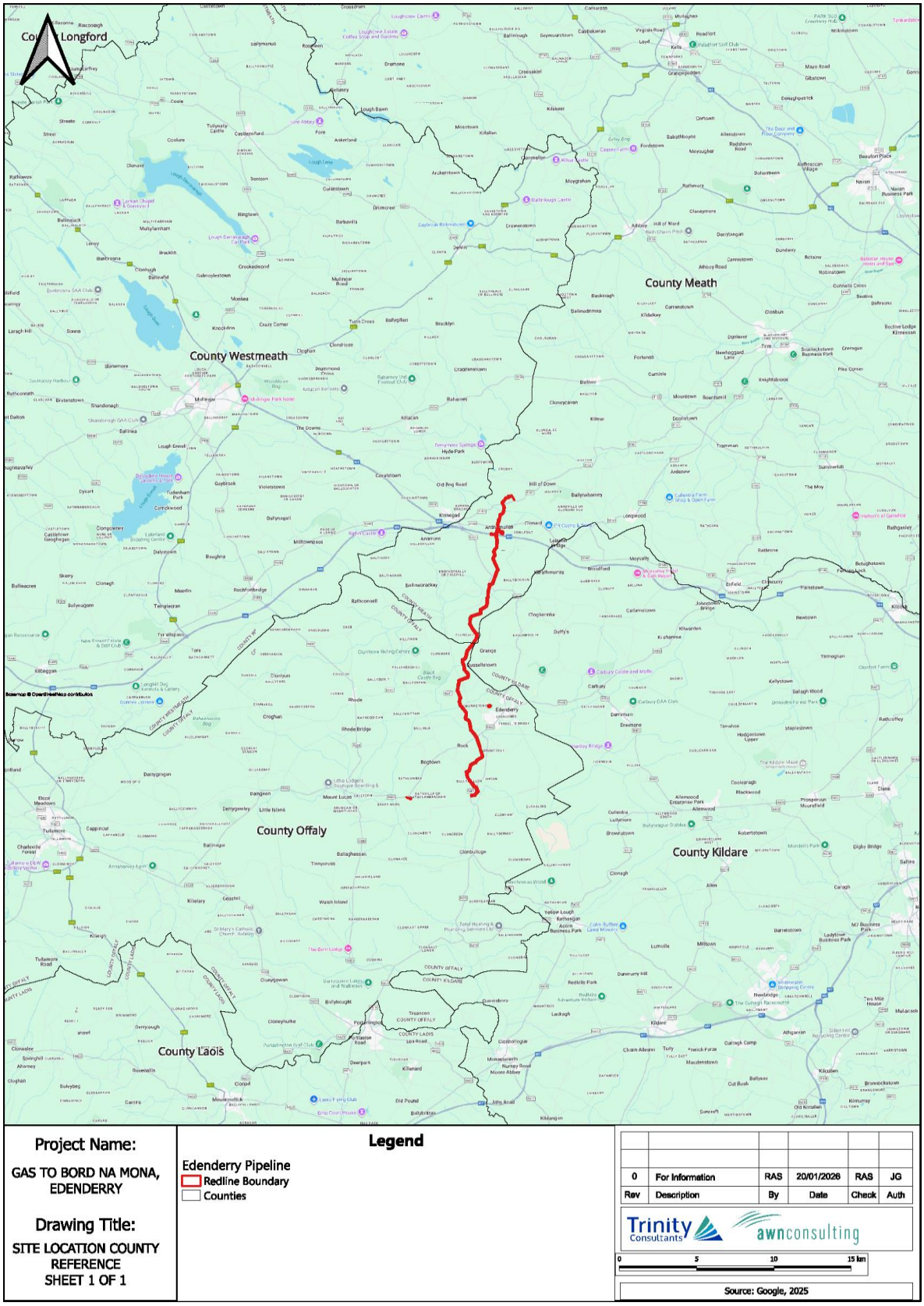


Figure 1-2 Proposed Development Site Location County Reference



1.1.1 The Applicant

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) is the state-owned public body that owns, builds, operates, and maintains Ireland's €3bn, 14,758km national gas network, which is considered one of the safest and most modern renewables-ready gas networks in the world. The gas network is the cornerstone of Ireland's energy system, securely supplying more than 30% of Ireland's total energy and almost 50% of the country's electricity generation. Over 720,000 Irish homes and businesses trust Ireland's gas network to provide efficient and reliable energy to meet their heating, cooking, manufacturing and transport needs.

1.1.2 Need for the Proposed Development

The Applicant is applying to install an underground gas transmission pipeline and associated infrastructure to provide a gas connection to the Bord na Móna Cushaling Peaker Plant at the Edenderry Renewable Energy Complex.

The primary purpose of the Proposed Development is to enable a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the operation of the existing Cushaling Peaker Plant. At present, the plant relies solely on liquid fuel when operating. Providing a natural gas supply will allow the plant to operate in a dual-fuel configuration, with natural gas as the primary fuel and liquid fuel retained as a backup.

The dual-fuel arrangement provides additional operational flexibility and security of supply, enabling the plant to continue fulfilling its critical role in supplying balancing and peaking capacity to the national electricity system.

GNI is a statutory body whose primary function is to own, operate, develop, and maintain the natural gas transmission and distribution system in Ireland. It has a statutory obligation, pursuant to Section 10A(2) of the Gas Act 1976 (as amended), to enter into binding agreements for access to the gas system, subject to specified terms, conditions, and exemptions, including compliance with a CRU-approved connection policy. The Proposed Development is therefore required to enable GNI to fulfil its statutory and contractual obligations and to deliver on national and EU policy commitments relating to energy security and access to the gas network.

1.2 Relevant Legislative Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment

1.2.1 Background

EIA is an essential tool in the implementation of EU environmental legislation. According to the *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment* (August 2018) the objective of Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU ('the EIA Directive'), is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, through the establishment of minimum requirements for EIA, prior to development consent being given, of public and private developments that are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The requirement for EIA is set out in the EIA Directive which) has been transposed into existing Irish planning consent procedures i.e., the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended (the Act) and Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended (the Regulations).

The EIA process involves the preparation of an EIAR by the applicant. This report is then subjected to review by the competent authority, who will also consult with the public and the relevant prescribed bodies. The competent authority will consider the EIAR as well as any other pertinent information before arriving at a reasoned conclusion regarding the significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment.

1.2.2 Relevant Legislation, Policy, and Guidelines

This EIAR has been prepared in accordance with the most relevant guidance and legalisation, including the following:

- EIA Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by EIA Directive (2014/52/EU);
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- Planning and Development Act 2024;
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended);
- *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment* (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018);
- *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022);
- *European Commission,* Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Scoping (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended) (European Commission, 2017);
- *European Commission,* Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended) (European Commission, 2017); and
- *European Commission,* Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (European Commission, 2001).
- The Gas Act 1976, as amended

1.2.3 EIA Project Thresholds

The EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) distinguishes between projects for which EIA is mandatory and those for which EIA may be required, depending on their nature, scale and potential to give rise to significant environmental effects. Annex I of the EIA Directive lists classes of projects that are considered, by their nature, to be likely to have significant effects on the environment and for which EIA is therefore mandatory. Annex II lists classes of projects for which EIA may be required, subject to assessment by the competent authority.

These Annexes are transposed into Irish law through Schedule 5 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.* The EU Member States can choose to apply thresholds for Annex II projects or use a case-by-case examination, or a combination of both, to assess where EIA is required. In Ireland, a combination of both has been applied.

In Ireland, projects for which an EIA is mandatory are set out in the Schedule 5, Part 1 and Part 2 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended*. Schedule 5, Part 1 comprises development types for which EIA is mandatory in all circumstances, irrespective of scale or context. Schedule 5, Part 2 comprises development types for which EIA may be required, generally subject to specified thresholds or, where those thresholds are not exceeded, subject to EIA screening having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.

In determining whether EIA is required, regard must be had not only to the headline description of the project, but also to its wider context. The EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022) make clear that assessment should extend beyond a general or high-level project description and should consider the component parts of the project.

In this context, and in order to ensure a robust and comprehensive assessment, the Proposed Development has been considered as a whole. The wider development context and the component parts of the Proposed Development AWN have identified the thresholds of relevance to the proposal from Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5; outlined in Table 1-1 and Table 1-2. This approach ensures compliance with the requirements of the EIA Directive, the Planning and Development Regulations, and the EPA Guidance (2022), and provides the basis for determining the applicability of EIA to the Proposed Development.

Table 1-1 Relevant Schedule 5 Part 1 types or classes of development and requirement for EIA

Development for the Purposes of Class:	Related Development Details	Requirement for EIA
16. Pipelines with a diameter of more than 800mm and a length of more than 40km: for the transport of gas, oil, chemicals, and, for the transport of carbon dioxide (CO2) streams for the purposes of geological storage, including associated booster stations.	The Proposed Development comprises a gas transmission pipeline with a nominal bore of 300 mm and an overall length of approximately 23.65 km . As such, it does not exceed the thresholds of a pipeline diameter greater than 800 mm or a length greater than 40 km.	No – EIA is not mandatory under this class for the Proposed Development.

Table 1-2 Relevant Schedule 5 Part 2 types or classes of development and requirement for EIA

Development for the Purposes of Class:	Related Development Details	Requirement for EIA
10 (i). Oil and gas pipeline installations and pipelines for the transport of CO_2 streams for the purposes of geological storage (projects not included in Part 1 of this Schedule).	The Proposed Development is of a type listed as Part 2, Class 10(i).	The Proposed Development falls within Part 2, Class 10(i) as it comprises the installation of a natural gas transmission pipeline. While the project is of a listed class, it is sub-threshold, because no quantitative threshold applies to Class 10(i). This means that EIA is not automatically mandatory, but instead the project requires EIA Screening. In accordance with Section 40A(b) of the Gas Act, the competent authority (CRU) must undertake an EIA Screening to determine whether the project is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.
15. Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7.	The Proposed Development is: of a type listed under Part 2, Class 10(i); does not exceed any applicable threshold (as none are defined for this class); therefore must be considered under Class 15, which requires EIA if the development is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the Schedule 7 criteria.	Following examination of: the nature, scale and location of the Proposed Development; and the sensitivity of environmental receptors it is considered by AWN that the Proposed Development requires an EIAR, even though it is sub-threshold, because a full EIA is necessary to appropriately assess the potential for significant direct, indirect and cumulative environmental effects.

1.3 Methodology and Format of the EIA Report

1.3.1 EIA Report Main Structure

This EIAR has been laid out using the grouped format structure, the report examines each environmental factor in a separate chapter (the chapters are listed in Table 1-3). These EIAR chapters have been prepared by suitably qualified expert(s) and have considered the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development under the following headings:

- Assessment Methodology;
- Receiving Environment;
- Characteristics of the Proposed Development;
- Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development;
- Mitigation Measures;
- Monitoring or Reinstatement Measures; and
- Residual Effects of the Proposed Development.

Interactions between environmental factors are addressed separately in Chapter 16 of this EIAR.

While the EIAR focuses on the Proposed Development, each environmental specialist also consider the potential cumulative impact (as far as practically possible) of the Proposed Development with any future development and the cumulative impacts with planned and permitted developments in the locality. The assessment of cumulative impacts arising from the Proposed Development, in combination with other developments, are addressed in Chapter 17.

Chapter 18 provides a consolidated Summary of Residual Effects arising from all technical assessments contained within Chapters 4 to 15.

Table 1-3 EIA Report Structure

EIAR Volume	Section / Chapter Title
Volume 1	Non-Technical Summary
Volume 2	Chapter 1: Introduction to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report
	Chapter 2: Description of the Proposed Development
	Chapter 3: Alternatives
	Chapter 4: Human Health and Population
	Chapter 5: Land, Soils, and Geology
	Chapter 6: Hydrology and Hydrogeology
	Chapter 7: Biodiversity
	Chapter 8: Air Quality
	Chapter 9: Climate
	Chapter 10: Noise and Vibration
	Chapter 11: Landscape and Visual
	Chapter 12: Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage
	Chapter 13: Material Assets – Traffic and Transportation
	Chapter 14: Material Assets – Utilities
	Chapter 15: Material Assets – Waste
	Chapter 16: Interactions – Interrelationship between the Aspects
	Chapter 17: Cumulative Impact
	Chapter 18: Summary of Residual Effects
Volume 3	Appendix
Volume 4	Figures

1.3.2 Contributors to the EIA Report

The preparation and co-ordination of this EIAR has been completed by AWN Consulting in conjunction with experienced subject matter experts. Each environmental specialist of the Applicant's project team was commissioned having regard to their previous experience in EIA; their knowledge of relevant environmental legislation relevant to their topic; familiarity with the relevant standards and criteria for evaluation relevant to their topic; ability to interpret the specialised documentation of the construction sector and to understand and anticipate how their topic will be affected during construction and operation phases of development; ability to arrive at practicable and reliable measure to mitigate or avoid adverse environmental impacts; and to clearly and comprehensively present their findings.

Table 1-4 below outlines the specific responsibilities of each author(s) and their corresponding EIAR chapter(s). Further information regarding the qualifications and relevant experience of the EIAR team can be found below the table.

Table 1-4 EIA Project Team Qualifications and Technical Chapters

Topic	Main Author Competency Details
Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report	Jonathan Gauntlett (BSocSc EnvPl, BBA Econ) of AWN Consulting. Jonathan Gauntlett is an Associate in the Environment Team at AWN. He holds a Bachelor of Social Science in Environmental Planning and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics from Waikato University, New Zealand. Jonathan has over ten years' experience in environmental compliance, planning, and management of Environmental Impact Assessments, licensing, and urban planning. His recent projects involve Strategic Housing Development including EIAR and EIA Screening Reports, Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), and planning applications for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities; EPA Licence applications for biopharmaceutical and ICT facilities. Jonathan's expertise extends to impact assessment, licensing, environmental compliance, and project management. He has experience working in the environmental consultancy, planning, and regulatory fields from Ireland, the UK, and New Zealand. David Doran is a Senior Environmental Consultant with AWN Consulting. David has a MSc in Environmental and Energy Management and is an Affiliate Member of the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (AffISEP). He primarily works in the field of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and EIA Report preparation and coordination. Recent projects include the management of commercial, infrastructure, and residential EIARs, EIA Screening Reports, as well as Operational and Resource Waste Management Plans for residential, office, logistics park, and other commercial and industrial developments. David also specialises in construction environmental compliance.
Chapter 2 – Description of the Proposed Development	Jonathan Gauntlett, David Doran (as above)
Chapter 3 – Alternatives	Jonathan Gauntlett, David Doran (as above)
Chapter 4 - Human Health and Population	Marcelle Jordaan is an Environmental Consultant working on a range of projects including EIA reports, EPA license applications and license compliance, site visits, environmental audits, and regulatory compliance for developments across various sectors. Marcelle holds a BSc in Environmental and Biological Sciences from North-West University in South Africa, with a specialization in Environmental Microbiology.

	Input from technical authors.
Chapter 5 - Land, Soils, and Geology	Marcelo Allende (BSc, BEng) is a Principal Environmental Consultant (Hydrologist) at AWN with over 20 years of experience water resources technical studies, conceptual and numerical modelling and environmental consultancy. Marcelo holds a degree in Water Resource Civil Engineering (BEng, Hons) from the University of Chile and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BSc, Hons). He has worked on a wide of range of projects including multi-aspect environmental investigations, geo-environmental impact assessments, surface and groundwater resource management, hydrological and hydrogeological conceptual and numerical modelling, strategic and site specific flood risk assessments (Stage 1,2 and 3), Due Diligence reporting, baselines studies, soils, surface water and groundwater monitoring and field sampling programmes on a variety of brownfield and greenfield sites throughout Ireland as well as overseas in Chile, Argentina, Peru and Panama. He also has detailed knowledge of environmental guidance, legislation, regulations & standards and expertise in GIS (expert level) and MATTE studies at COMAH establishments. He is currently a member of the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH, Irish Group) and a member of Engineers Ireland (MIEI). Rashaqat Ali Siddiqui (BSc, Msc, MIT). Ali is a hydrogeologist with over 6 years' experience in water resource management and impact assessment. He has a Masters in Hydrogeology and is a former Education Secretary of the Irish chapter for the Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH). Ali's specialist area of expertise is water resource management, site investigation and monitoring, contaminated land Assessment, hydrological assessment and environmental impact assessment. Luke Maguire; is an Environmental Consultant at AWN with over 3.5 years of experience in Environmental Consulting and water resources. Luke holds a B.Sc. in Geoscience (Geology, Hydrology, Geochemistry, Geophysics, Climate and Environmental studies) from Trinity College University of Dublin and has worked on a range of developments including pharmaceutical plants, medical device facilities, ICT facilities and energy projects. Luke has experience in contaminated soil sampling and analysis, basement impact assessments, bulk excavations and largescale dewatering processes. Additionally, Luke has gained experience in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAR), Hydrological Risk Assessment , and WFD Assessment Reporting and has worked in multiple Environmental monitoring disciplines such as Chemical Wastewater (Intel), Ground Gas, Surface Water, and Groundwater Monitoring at numerous sites across Dublin.
Chapter 6 - Hydrology and Hydrogeology	Marcelo Allende , Rashaqat Ali Siddiqui, Luke Maguire (as above)
Chapter 7 - Biodiversity	Altemar - Bryan Deegan is the managing director of Altemar. Bryan is an environmental scientist and marine biologist with over 30 years' experience working in Irish terrestrial and aquatic environments, providing services to the State, Semi-State and industry. Bryan Deegan (MCIEEM) holds a MSc in Environmental Science, BSc (Hons.) in Applied Marine Biology, NCEA National Diploma in Applied Aquatic Science, a NCEA National Certificate in Science (Aquaculture) and commercial diving qualifications (HSE Part IV & Part III).

	Bryan is the overall lead for the Altemar team working on terrestrial and marine projects, from small scale one off housing to multi-billion euro contracts. He is a consultant that is particularly experienced in the provision of Appropriate Assessment, ecological impact assessment; technical advice; marine and terrestrial ecological surveying, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the development of environmental assessment processes for State Organisations. He has particular experience in ecological surveying and reporting, riparian works and works closely with Inland Fisheries Ireland. Recent projects include large infrastructural developments such as gas pipelines, river diversions, culvert installation and sub-sea cable landings, port works, in addition to carrying out constraint's assessments, Construction Environmental Management Plans, Ecological Clerk of Works and the development of appropriate mitigation measures to protect species and habitats of conservation significance. Frank Spellman (All surveys, Bio, Survey Reports) - Frank (BSc Zoology, MSc (Ind) Zoology) joined Altemar as an ecologist in 2023. He holds a BSc in Zoology from University College Dublin and a research-based MSc from the department of Zoology at Trinity College Dublin. He has had previous experience with governmental bodies, aquaculture settings, and academic research. He also contributes to a number of citizen science programmes. At Altemar, Frank has been lead ecologist on numerous development projects within Ireland, carrying out full non-avian mammal, ornithological, bat, Fossitt, freshwater, invasive species, and fisheries assessments on a diverse array of sites and projects. He is also involved in the preparation of AA/NIS, EcIA, Preliminary Ecological Assessment reports, and performing Ecological Clerk of Works roles. He strives to develop creative yet practical strategies for clients to navigate ecological constraints while providing positive outcomes for the environment. Emma Peters (All surveys, Bio, Survey Reports) - Emma Peters (BSc (Hons.) Environmental Science) is a skilled ecological assessor with an aptitude for flora identification, invasive species and bat detection through static detector surveys, dusk emergence, and dawn re-entry surveys. Emma has been the lead ecologist in 40+ projects responsible for mammal tracking, camera trapping, wintering bird, breeding bird, bat surveys, flora and habitat mapping. Jeff Boyle (Bat surveys, NIS) - Jeff (BSc. (Hons) Environmental Management) has worked with multi-disciplinary teams including planners, architects and engineers in the preparation of numerous statutory environmental reports. These include Appropriate Assessment Screenings & Natura Impact Statements (NIS), Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA), Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA), Biodiversity chapters of Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR) and Bat/Mammal/Flora/Invasive Species reports. Jeff is skilled in bat detection through static detector surveys, dusk emergence, and dawn re-entry surveys. He is also experienced in habitat assessment and has undertaken flora/invasive species surveys and breeding/wintering bird surveys to produce numerous ecological assessments on a range of residential, industrial, and commercial projects.

	Gayle O'Farrell (Bat surveys) - Gayle O'Farrell (BSc) joined Altemar in 2024. She holds a BSc Hons. in Agri-Environmental Sciences from University College Dublin. Since joining Altemar Gayle has led numerous projects that have involved producing AA Screenings, Natura Impact Statements, Ecological Impact Assessments, biodiversity chapters of EIAR's, Construction Environmental Management Plans, Biodiversity Enhancement Plans and bat assessments. Gayle is adept in wintering bird surveys, mammal assessments and breeding bird surveys. Additionally, Gayle has carried out numerous bat surveys over several survey seasons and has carried out static detector surveys, dusk emergence, and dawn re-entry surveys. Gayle is also experienced in habitat assessment and has undertaken flora/invasive species surveys to produce numerous ecological assessments on a range of residential, industrial and commercial projects. She has also carried numerous roles as ecological clerk of works on housing and infrastructural projects including gas pipeline works and river crossings. Luke Dodebier (Bat surveys) - Luke is a skilled and practical ecologist with experience in habitat restoration and invasive species monitoring and removal. He has expertise in terrestrial ecology, data analysis and environmental monitoring and is adept at delivering high quality data, managing complex projects, and fostering strong client relations He has worked in New Zealand and Canada and has co-led a specialist bat ecology team and designed large-scale acoustic surveys for wind farm projects. He has also led terrestrial and freshwater habitat surveys, including invasive species management and plant ID and is skilled in GIS mapping and data analysis. He holds Bachelor of Wildlife Biology Degree and is skilled in farm and herd management. Kalvin Townsend-Smyth (Bat surveys) - Kalvin is an experienced ecologist with over 6 years in ecological consultancy, including extensive work in Appropriate Assessment (AA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Kalvin has a background in both terrestrial and aquatic ecology, invasive species management, and GIS (ArcGIS & QGIS). He is skilled in field surveys, ecological reporting, and biodiversity protection for public and private clients. He recently completed an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation at Trinity College Dublin with research focused on marine mammal mortality. Jack Doyle (Bat surveys) - Jack Doyle is an experienced environmental project manager, joining Altemar in March 2021. Jack has a first-class honours MSc in Sustainable Environments, complemented by his completion of the CIEEM Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Metric Course. Jack has led and carried out a wide range of flora and fauna surveys across Ireland and produced ecological assessments on residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects. He has devised environmental reports for multiple subsea fibre optic cable projects within Irish waters, including the 2Africa Cable. Jack is highly motivated and skilled in breeding & wintering ornithological surveys, roving and static acoustic bat surveys, terrestrial non-avian mammal surveys, and habitat identification. Jack, having focused his MSc thesis studies on the implementation of the English BNG system into Irish planning, is responsible for Altemar's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) projects. He has extensive experience applying various BNG Metrics (including DEFRA & UE) to assess BNG on a wide range of projects across Ireland and utilises his expertise to facilitate the design of biodiversity-friendly developments.

Chapter 8 - Air Quality	Carl Ramskill is a Principal Environmental Consultant in the Air Quality and Climate section of AWN Consulting with 8 years' experience in Air Quality Consulting. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Chemistry and MSc (with Merit) in Air Pollution Management and Control from the University of Birmingham. He is a Member of the Institution of Environmental Science (MIEnvSc), Member of the Institute of Air Quality Management (MAIQM) and specialises in the fields of air quality, EIA and air dispersion modelling and monitoring.
Chapter 9 - Climate	Ciara Nolan (Principal Air Quality & Climate Consultant) holds a BSc in Energy Systems Engineering from University College Dublin and has also completed an MSc in Applied Environmental Science at UCD. She is a Member of the Institute of Air Quality Management (MIAQM) and the Institution of Environmental Science (MIEnvSc). She specialises in the fields of air monitoring, air quality & climate assessments for EIA and air dispersion modelling. Ciara has undertaken detailed climate assessments for various projects at EIA stage in line with the requirements in the National Climate Action Plan and Section 15 obligations under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act. Project types include residential, commercial and infrastructure developments (road, utility connections) as well as industrial developments and renewable energy projects.
Chapter 10 - Noise and Vibration	Leo Williams (Senior Acoustic Consultant) graduated from TCD with a BA, BAI (Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering) and an MAI (Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering). Leo is a Member of the Institute of Acoustics and has extensive experience in environmental noise impact assessment, in particular industrial/manufacturing and renewable energy noise sources. He has experience in room and building acoustics modelling and assessment. He has completed the IOA Diploma in Acoustics and Noise Control and is a registered sound insulation tester under the Sound Insulation Testing Register, Ireland (SITRI). Alex Round (Acoustic Technician) holds a BSc in Agri-Environmental Science. He has completed noise monitoring campaigns across numerous sites and is experienced in noise surveying for planning and development applications, and acoustic testing and reporting. He holds a certificate from the Institute of Acoustics in environmental noise monitoring.
Chapter 11 - Landscape and Visual	Macroworks – Cian Doughan is an Associate Director in Macroworks who specialise in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Established in 1999, Macro Works provide a full suite of LVIA related tools and skills for a broad spectrum of energy, infrastructure and commercial developments. Cian Doughan is an honours graduate of Landscape Architecture from UCD and is now a full corporate member of the Irish Landscape Institute. His main field of interest in landscape Architecture is that of landscape planning and, in particular LVIA. Cian has completed assessments for a wide range of development types across our portfolio, including important water supply projects, as well as a range of wind farm and solar farm applications. RCecent work includes Draft Landscape Design Guidelines for Irish Water Infrastructure projects, Ballinagree Wind Farm SID, Croaghaun Wind Farm, numerous Solar Farm developments, in addition to a wide range of infrastructure developments.

Chapter 12 - Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage	CRDS – Stephen Mandal holds an honours degree in Science (Geology) from Trinity College Dublin (1991) and a PhD in Geoarchaeology, also from Trinity College Dublin (1995). Following two years as a post-doctoral researcher in University College Dublin, he founded CRDS Ltd (established in 1997; incorporated in 1999), archaeological, cultural and architectural heritage consultants. As one of Ireland's leading heritage consultancies for almost 25 years, CRDS has employed over 600 archaeologists, undertaken some of the largest and most significant archaeological excavations throughout Ireland, and has won numerous national and international awards. He has overseen the writing of the Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Chapters of in excess of 100 EIARs dating from 1997 to present. This experience covers the island a wide range of development types including small scale developments close to culturally sensitive sites, large scale developments and liner developments including roads, ESBI power lines, railways and cycle paths.
Chapter 13 - Material Assets – Traffic and Transportation	CST Group – Phillip Bayfield (BE MSc CEng MIEI MICE). Phillip is a Chartered Engineer with over 30 years' experience in the industry. He has overseen civil and structural engineering design of variety of projects including several road and bridge schemes, commercial, educational, public and residential buildings as well as works in the public domain and has been responsible for project team management, resourcing, programming and account management. Projects include the Sutherland School of Law Enabling Works Contract on behalf of UCD, Thornton Hall Access Road and Thornton Hall Offsite Works projects on behalf of the Irish Prison Service, Scotch Hall Development, Kildare Civic Offices infrastructure and Beacon Gateway. Philip is also an experienced PSDP coordinator.
Chapter 14 - Material Assets - Utilities	David Doran, Marcelle Jordaan (as above)
Chapter 15 - Material Assets – Waste	Chonaill Bradley (Bsc ENV,PG Dip Circ Econ, AssocCIWM) is an associate in the Environment Team at AWN. He holds a BSc in Environmental Science from Griffith University, Australia and a Postgraduate Diploma in Circular Economy Leadership for the Built Environment from the Atlantic Technological University, Galway. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Waste Management (AssocCIWM). Chonaill has over 10 years' experience in the environmental consultancy sector and specialises in environmental construction compliance, sustainability, resource and waste management. Isabel Gogarty Meade (BSc ENV) is an Environmental Consultant in the Environmental Team at AWN. She holds a BSc in Environmental Science from University College Cork. Isabel has experience working on a range of developments from residential to commercial and specialises in waste management.
Chapter 16 - Interactions – Interrelationship between the Aspects	This chapter is drafted with input from all relevant EIA team members, each contributing based on their technical and chapter specific expertise.
Chapter 17 - Cumulative Impacts	This chapter is drafted with input from all relevant EIA team members, each contributing based on their technical and chapter specific expertise.
Chapter 18 – Summary of Residual Effects	This chapter is drafted with input from all relevant EIA team members, each contributing based on their technical and chapter specific expertise.

1.3.3 Methodology for the Assessment and Description of Effects

The assessment of likely significant effects on the environment presented within this EIAR has been undertaken using a consistent and standardised method of describing environmental effects, in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022).

All technical assessments contained within the specialist chapters of this EIAR apply the EPA methodology for describing effects in order to ensure that potential impacts are identified and assessed. This approach facilitates consistency across environmental topics and allows for an informed understanding of the nature, scale and significance of effects arising from the Proposed Development.

For each environmental factor, effects are characterised by reference to a number of key parameters, including:

- the quality of the effect (positive, neutral or negative);
- the significance of the effect, having regard to the sensitivity of the receiving environment; and
- the duration and reversibility of the effect.

Where relevant the qualified by reference to:

- the extent and context in which the effect occurs;
- the probability of the effect occurring; and
- the type of effect, including whether it is direct, indirect, cumulative or residual.

The terminology and definitions used throughout the EIAR to describe effects are derived directly from the EPA Guidelines (2022) and are summarised in Table 1-5.

Table 1-5 Description of Effects as per EPA Guidelines (2022)

Effect Characteristic	Term	Description
Quality	Positive	A change which improves the quality of the environment
	Neutral	A change which does not affect the quality of the environment
	Negative	A change which reduces the quality of the environment
Significance	Imperceptible	An impact capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences
	Not Significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without noticeable consequences
	Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities
	Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging trends
	Significant	An effect, which by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment

Effect Characteristic	Term	Description
	Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters the majority of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
	Profound	An impact which obliterates sensitive characteristics
Duration of Effects	Momentary Effects	Effects lasting from seconds to minutes
	Brief Effects	Effects lasting less than a day
	Temporary Effects	Effects lasting less than a year
	Short-term Effects	Effects lasting one to seven years.
	Medium-term Effects	Effects lasting seven to fifteen years
	Long-term Effects	Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years
	Permanent Effects	Effects lasting over sixty years
	Reversible Effects	Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration
Extent and Context	Extent	Describe the size of the area, the number of sites and the proportion of a population affected by an effect.
	Context	Describe whether the extent, duration or frequency will conform or contrast with established (baseline) conditions (is it the biggest, longest effect ever?)
Probability of Effects	Likely Effects	The effects that can reasonably be expected to occur as a result of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.
	Unlikely Effects	The effects that can reasonably be expected not to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.
Type of Effects[2]	Indirect Effects	Impacts on the environment, which are not a direct result of the project, often produced away from the project site or because of a complex pathway.
	Cumulative	The addition of many minor or significant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects.
	'Do Nothing'	The environment as it would be in the future should no development of any kind be carried out
	`Worst case' Effects	The effects arising from a project in the case where mitigation measures substantially fail
	Indeterminable	When the full consequences of a change in the environment cannot be described
	Irreversible	When the character, distinctiveness, diversity, or reproductive capacity of an environment is permanently lost
	Residual	Degree of environmental change that will occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect

[2] For the purposes of facilitating the Competent Authority in conducting Environmental Impact Assessment as defined by Annex 1 of the EU Directive, the terms "imperceptible effects", "not significant effects", "Slight effects", and "moderate effects" used within this report, while exhibiting varying degrees of impact, are all considered to be without significant consequence.

Effect Characteristic	Term	Description
	Synergistic	Where the resultant impact is of greater significance than the sum of its constituents

1.4 EIA Scoping and Consultation Processes

The scope of the EIAR has been defined at an early stage of the design process to ensure that all relevant environmental issues were addressed in the subsequent studies.

To establish the scope, a comprehensive review of the development site's context, including its locality and any previously permitted developments, has been undertaken. This review helped identify the specific matters to be covered within this EIAR. By identifying and addressing these issues upfront, the EIAR aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development.

The structure and presentation of the EIAR is designed to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public and stakeholders. The EIAR is structured in a clear and accessible manner, allowing easy navigation through its content. Additionally, a non-technical summary is provided, which presents a concise overview of the EIAR's main findings and conclusions. The presentation of the information is done in a way that is understandable to both technical experts and non-experts, enabling a wider audience to grasp the key findings and implications of the assessment.

Public participation in the EIA process is facilitated through the statutory planning application process. As part of this process, the EIAR will be made available to the public on a dedicated application website, as well as published on the websites of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and ACP, allowing interested individuals and organisations to review and comment on the report. This provides an opportunity for public input, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives are considered before making decisions regarding the Proposed Development.

To further enable public access to the EIAR, information about the report is also made available through the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government's EIA Portal. This portal serves as a centralised platform that can be accessed by the public, stakeholders, and regulatory authorities. By utilising this portal alongside the online planning systems, broader public participation and scrutiny, as well as transparency and accountability in the EIA process is enabled. Ensuring public awareness and involvement is a core objective of the EIAR process in Ireland. By disseminating the information contained in the EIAR, the aim is to make the public and local community aware of the likely environmental impacts of the proposed project prior to the granting of consent. This empowers the public to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process and voice their concerns or provide feedback.

1.4.1.1 Non-Statutory Consultation

Prior to finalising the EIAR, non-statutory consultation was undertaken to seek feedback on the Proposed Development. This early engagement aimed to identify any environmental considerations that stakeholders wished to raise in advance of completing the assessment. The following bodies were contacted by email. This early engagement aimed to identify any environmental considerations that stakeholders wished to raise in advance of completing the assessment. The following bodies were contacted by email:

- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI): To address potential impacts on aquatic habitats and fisheries resources.
- Waterways Ireland: To address potential impacts on the Grand Canal
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit (DAU):
  - *Natural Heritage (National Parks and Wildlife Service):* To consider potential effects on protected species, designated sites (including Natura 2000), and management of flora, fauna, landscapes, and geology.

- *Built Heritage:* To consider potential effects on protected structures, historic buildings, streetscapes, and architectural conservation, as well as to promote local customs, folklore, traditional crafts, archives, and museums.

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland: To address potential impacts on TII structures.

These consultations were intended to provide early engagement and allow stakeholders to raise any concerns or recommendations prior to finalisation of the EIAR.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) reviewed the proposed underground gas pipeline and highlighted the need to protect local rivers, streams, and fish habitats during all stages of the project. They noted that the pipeline route crosses sensitive watercourses that support species such as salmon, trout, eel, and lamprey, and therefore construction activities must be carefully managed to prevent pollution, sediment release, or disturbance to aquatic environments. IFI requested that watercourse crossings use appropriate methods (e.g., no fords), that in-stream works only occur at suitable times of year, and that strong measures be put in place to control silt, protect water quality, and prevent the spread of invasive species. They also emphasised the importance of proper fuel storage, spill prevention, and adherence to relevant environmental legislation and guidelines. Overall, IFI's consultation response focuses on safeguarding fisheries and water quality, ensuring the project is designed and constructed in a way that avoids negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage DAU reviewed the Proposed Development plans and provided archaeological observations/recommendations. This included the need for:

- A baseline archaeological and historical study comprising site inspection/s by a suitably qualified Archaeologist and documentary research including reviews of historical, cartographic and aerial photography sources.
- Walkover surveys and field inspections
- The desk-study and field inspection regime should inform (as appropriate):
    - Targeted non-intrusive advance Geophysical Survey or prospection (such as Resistivity, Magnetometer or Ground Penetrating Radar Surveys)
    - Targeted advance archaeological test excavation
- Any and all intrusive advance investigations (such as, but not limited to, ground investigations for soils/geology/hydrogeology) carried out as part of the Planning and Environmental Considerations Report (PECR) or design process should be subject to a programme of archaeological monitoring by a suitably qualified Archaeologist

TII in their response advised that any development should follow TII publications/guidance, particularly CC-PAV-04007 Requirements for the Reinstatement of Openings in National Roads.

At the date of preparation of this EIAR, no feedback has been received from Waterways Ireland or National Parks and Wildlife Service (via the DAU).

1.4.1.2 Public and Landowner Engagement Meetings

A programme of public consultation was carried out to inform the public of the Proposed Development. Engagement centred on early, transparent communication with potentially affected landowners and community members. Four key stages of public consultation were undertaken as outlined below.

Public Meeting 1:

Date: Public meeting held on Tuesday, the 9th of April 2024.

Location: Kinnegad GAA Club, Mullingar Road, Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath. N91 C998

Discussed: The purpose of this meeting was to initiate dialogue with landowners who may be affected by the proposed pipeline project. The session focused on outlining the general scope of the pipeline, including its intended connection to Bord Na Mona's existing Renewable Energy Complex. Attendees were provided with an overview of the project objectives, anticipated timelines, and potential impacts, while also being given the opportunity to ask questions and share initial feedback. The aim of this public engagement was to build relationships with potential landowners by providing transparency and collaboration at an early stage of project development.

Public Meeting 2:

Date: Public meeting held on Wednesday, the 10th of April 2024.

Location: Edenderry GAA Club, Carrick Road, Edenderry, Co. Offaly. R45 W659

Discussed: The purpose of this meeting was to initiate dialogue with landowners who may be affected by the proposed pipeline project. The session focused on outlining the general scope of the pipeline, including its intended connection to Bord Na Mona's existing Renewable Energy Complex . Attendees were provided with an overview of the project objectives, anticipated timelines, and potential impacts, while also being given the opportunity to ask questions and share initial feedback. The aim of this public engagement was to build relationships with potential landowners by providing transparency and collaboration at an early stage of project development.

Public Meeting 3: Preferred Corridor

Date: Tuesday, 19 June 2024

Location: Kinnegad GAA Hall

Discussed: The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate meaningful engagement with landowners who may be impacted by the proposed pipeline development. During the session, the project team outlined the three refined corridor options, explained the rationale behind each, and provided an opportunity for attendees to share feedback, raise concerns, and ask questions. This dialogue aimed to ensure transparency and incorporate the input of landowners into the decision-making

Public Meeting 4: Landowner 1-1 Engagement

Date: 12th of November 2024

Location: Kinnegad GAA Club, Mullingar Road, Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath. N91 C998

Date: 19th of November 2024

Location: Edenderry GAA Club, Carrick Road, Edenderry, Co. Offaly. R45 W659

Discussed: The purpose of this meeting was to engage directly with landowners situated within the refined proposed pipeline route. The one-to-one landowner meeting focused on presenting individual maps to each landowner effected by the pipeline, highlighting the corridor boundary and key features on the map. All attendees were given the opportunity to examine the proposed route, ask one-to-one questions, and provide feedback and requests regarding potential impacts on their properties. This engagement aimed to prioritize strong relationships with landowners and encourage open communication throughout the project and design process to move towards final route design.

1.4.1.3 Statutory Consultation – Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Section 2 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), defines "strategic infrastructure development" as including, inter alia:

"(e) any proposed strategic gas infrastructure development referred to in section 182C(1)"

Section 2 of the Act further defines a "strategic gas infrastructure development" as follows:

""strategic gas infrastructure development" means any Proposed Development comprising or for the purposes of a strategic downstream gas pipeline or a strategic upstream gas pipeline, and associated terminals, buildings and installations, whether above or below ground, including any associated discharge pipe."

Section 2 of the Act also provides a definition of "strategic downstream gas pipeline":

"strategic downstream gas pipeline" means any proposed gas pipeline, other than an upstream gas pipeline, which is designed to operate at 16 bar or greater, and is longer than 20 kilometres in length"

Section 182C(1) of the Act 2000 , provides that applications for approval of a strategic gas infrastructure development shall be made directly to the Board (i.e. ACP), it states:

"Where a person (hereafter referred to in this section as the "undertaker") intends to carry out a strategic gas infrastructure development (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182D as "Proposed Development"), and where the Board determines following consultations under section 182E that the development comes within paragraph (a), (b) or (c) of section 37A(2), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared—

(a) an application for approval of the development under section 182D, and

(b) an environmental impact assessment report or Natura impact statement or both that report and that statement, as the case may be, in respect of the development,

and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly, indicating in the application whether the application relates to a strategic upstream gas pipeline or a strategic downstream gas pipeline".

As set out in section 182C(1) of the Act , to be considered as strategic gas infrastructure development, a development must also come within one or more of paragraphs (a) to (c) of section 37A(2) of the Act (i.e. the 'strategic' criteria). Section 37A(2) states:

"(a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,

(b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,

(c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority".

Gas Networks Ireland entered into preliminary consultation with Offaly County Council, Westmeath County Council, Meath County Council and Kildare County Council prior to the submission of a pre-application request to ACP. A pre application meeting was held with each of the local authorities on the following dates;

- Westmeath County Council - 21st March 2025
- Offaly County Council - 9th April 2025
- Meath County Council - 26th September 2024
- Kildare County Council - 26th September 2024

The applicant has had 1 no. pre-application consultation meeting with ACP on the 30th January 2025, in response to a pre-application consultation request received by ACP on the 27th November 2024.

ACP have confirmed in a letter dated the 12th of February 2026 that the Proposed Development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure within the meaning of section 182C of the Act. The determination was made following the conclusion of the pre-application process under ACP Reg. Ref.: ABP- 321356 -24.

Therefore, the current application is required to be submitted directly to ACP under section 182C(1) of the Act.

The determination from the Commission that the development constitutes a SID was accompanied by an Inspector's Report, which recommended that the applicant be informed that the Proposed Development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure.

1.4.1.4 Design Flexibility Request

A design flexibility request was submitted to ACP on the 27th June 2025. On the 15th July, JSA Planning received formal acknowledgement from ACP (ACP REF. 323000). A meeting was set up by ACP and was held on the 24th July 2025.

At that meeting, ACP noted that they were seeking internal legal advice regarding the design flexibility request. They indicated at the time that they would share that advice, or a summary of it, with the applicant.

A formal legal letter was sent to ACP on the 7th October 2025. The purpose of the letter was to set out GNI's position on Section 182F of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (As amended), which was hoped to assist ACP who were seeking its own advice in this regard at the time.

A Design Flexibility Determination was received from ACP on the Friday 13th 2026. ACP determined that the design flexibility was not justified. ACP stated the following;

"Regarding the Horizontal alignment flexibility request, the Commission considers the prospective applicant has not demonstrated circumstances that justify a request for such design flexibility as guided by Circular Letter PL11/2023 – New Design Flexibility Provisions, with regard to certain unconfirmed details. Accordingly, the Commission is not satisfied that there are circumstances relating to the Proposed Development that indicate that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and decided before these details are confirmed.

Options that may not be clarified at the application stage should be set out and assessed in the application documentation (including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Natura Impact Statement) and in the event of a favourable decision on the application, construction related methodologies could be agreed prior to commencement of development, by way of compliance with a planning condition".

1.4.1.5 Statutory Consultation – Gas Act 1976 (as amended)

In accordance with requirements of Section 26 (1A) of the Gas Act 1976 (as amended), the applicant notified the CRU in writing of its intention to make an application for the CRU's consent under S39A(1) in relation to the construction of the pipeline. On 26 February 2025 the CRU responded to GNI confirming that GNI has demonstrating a bona fide intention to make an application for consent to construct has been made (CRU Ref.: D/25/2780).

The applicant, on submission, will issue digital copies of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report to the specified bodies listed below, informing them that they can make submissions and observations to the Commission of the Regulation of Utilities within the period specified.

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Development Applications Unit);

- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications;
- Minister for Transport;
- The planning authority or authorities in the area or areas in which it is proposed to situate the Proposed Development (which may include inter alia Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council, Meath County Council or Westmeath County Council, depending on the final alignment of the route)
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland
- Failte Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- Córas lompair Éireann
- Railway Procurement Agency
- Railway Safety Commission
- Environmental Protection Agency
- The Heritage Council
- Health Service
- Commission for Energy Regulation
- Uisce Éireann

1.5 Additional Assessments Required

The additional reports and/or assessments required under Legalisation or EU Directives other than the EIA Directive in respect of the Proposed Development are described in this section.

1.5.1 Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC aims to protect and enhance the quality of the water environment (both surface water and groundwater) across all European Union member states. The WFD requires all EU member states to classify the current condition or 'status or potential' of surface and groundwater bodies and to set a series of objectives for maintaining or improving conditions so that water bodies maintain or reach 'good status or potential' during the next river basin management planning cycle. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other stakeholders such as An Coimisúin Pleanála and planning authorities are the competent authority for implementing the WFD in Ireland. As part of their role, these authorities must consider whether proposals for new developments (other than where exemptions apply) have the potential to:

- Cause a deterioration of a water body from its current status or potential; and/or
- Prevent future attainment of good status or potential where not already achieved.

As a result, new developments that have the potential to impact on current or predicted WFD status are required to determine whether the project will cause a deterioration of the status of the body of surface water or if it would jeopardise the attainment of good surface water status, having regard to the existing status of the water body as designated in accordance with the Directive.

The Water Framework Directive Screening Assessment has been prepared for the Proposed Development by AWN Consulting and is included with the application documentation under separate cover.

1.5.2 Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC)

The main EU legislation for conserving biodiversity is the Directive 2009/147//EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive); and

the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive).

The Habitats Directive is the cornerstone of habitats and species protection in Ireland. The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the associated Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) are transposed into Irish legislation by Part XAB of the 2000 Act and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) as amended.

The environmental sensitivity of the Proposed Development site in respect of Natura 2000 sites designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive have been considered with reference to the application's Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement , which comprises an initial impact assessment of a project; examining the direct and indirect impacts that it might have on its own or in combination with other plans and projects, on one or more Natura 2000 sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement has been prepared for the Proposed Development by Altemar Environmental Consultants and is included with the application documentation under separate cover.

1.5.3 Flood Risk Assessment

The Floods Directive (Directive 2007/60/EC) establishes a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks, with the aim to reduce the adverse consequences on human health, the environment and material assets.

The Floods Directive requires Member States to assess if all water courses and coastlines are at risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk. The Floods Directive also reinforces the rights of the public to access this information and to have a say in the planning process.

The Floods Directive must be implemented in tandem with the WFD. In Ireland, the OPW is the national authority assigned with the implementation of the Floods Directive, which was transposed into Irish law by the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations SI 122 of 2010.

The Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been prepared by JBA Consulting in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Local Government (2009). The site-specific FRA is included with the application documentation under separate cover.