

Emerging Preferred Option Consultation Day

Environmental Constraints

Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Processes

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) will fulfil the requirements set out by Directive 2014/52/EU and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (EPA, 2022). The EIAR will also reference the 'Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment', published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in August 2018.

The purpose of the EIAR is to assess the proposed scheme for likely significant effects on the environment, both favorable and adverse effects. The environmental themes addressed in the EIAR include the human, social and economic aspect, biodiversity-flora & fauna, land, soils and geology, landscape, cultural heritage/archaeology.

During the preparation of the EIAR, the engineering, route selection and design of the scheme is developed in a manner which takes account of environmental constraints and sensitivities, as far as possible. For any significant effects which cannot be avoided, mitigation may be recommended in the form of best-practice measures which manage impacts during construction or aim to reduce or remedy impacts to the environment due to the existence of the scheme.

In parallel with the EIAR, "Appropriate Assessment" (AA) is required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (the statute in Irish law is the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011). Screening is required for likely significant effects on sites designated for nature conservation, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), under the Habitats Directive, or Special Protection Areas (SPA), under the Birds Directive. If the possibility of effects is identified at screening stage, then an appropriate assessment must be carried out which begins with preparing a Natura Impact Report (NIR) which assesses the significance of effects with regard to the conservation objectives of the European Sites.

The EIAR and NIS are prepared to inform the public, statutory consultees and the competent authority, in this case the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, for the purposes of the EIA and AA processes leading to a decision on consent and confirmation of the scheme. Assessing the impacts of the project and associated activities requires a good understanding of the ecological baseline conditions. The Environmental Consultants Ryan Hanley have established detailed baseline information about current and past conditions in the terrestrial and aquatic environment from both direct flora and fauna surveys and background research.

