Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath County Council

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SLR Project No.: 425.069056.00001

20 November 2026

Revision: 2

Revision Record

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Authorised By
1	18 November 2026	CT/JR	JM	JM
2	20 November 2026	LJ	KH	KH
	Click to enter a date.			
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Meath County Council (MCC) has prepared proposed Draft Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2030[1] (hereafter referred to as 'Variation No.6'). The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (the Meath CDP / CDP) was adopted in September 2021 and came into effect in November 2021. The CDP is divided into four volumes. Volume 1 of the CDP sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2030. Volume 2 of the CDP includes written statements and accompanying maps for all settlements within the county and sets out development and land use zoning objectives for each area. Volume 3 of the CDP includes a book of maps for the county. Volume 4 includes the Environmental Assessments.

The proposed Draft Variation No.6 purpose is to give effect to a plan led evidence-based approach to the protection of existing energy infrastructure assets within the County and potential co-location with large energy users to enable the transition to a low-carbon economy on a commercial, industrial and community scale.

SLR Environmental Consulting (Ireland) Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'SLR Consulting') have been commissioned by MCC to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the proposed Variation No.6 of the Meath CDP 2021-2030. This Environmental Report should be read in conjunction with the Draft Variation No.6 and the AA Screening and Natura Impact Report (NIR).

1.2 Context to Draft Variation No. 6

The purpose of Draft Variation No. 6 is to establish a plan-led, evidence-based approach to protecting existing energy infrastructure assets across the County and supporting their co-location with large energy users, helping to enable the transition to a low-carbon economy at commercial, industrial and community scales. In considering this, MCC is providing a policy framework for the protection of existing infrastructure assets and is identifying a potential strategic site where co-location with a large energy user would strengthen the national grid and help in the transition to a low to zero carbon economy. Further details on the background to the Variation No.6 can be found in **Section 2**.

1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Ireland is required under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended)[2] and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended)[3]. These Regulations transpose the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)[4] into Irish law and apply to a range of plans

[1] Meath County Council, County Development Plan. Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-as-varied

[2] Government of Ireland (2004) S.I. No. 435/2004 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004. Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/435/made/en/print

[3] Government of Ireland (2004) S.I. No. 436/2004 – Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/436/made/en/print

[4] European Union (2001) Directive 2001/42/EC. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/42/oj/eng

and programmes, including statutory land use plans. The purpose of SEA is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation, adoption and implementation of plans and programmes, with a view to promoting sustainable development.

SEA is a systematic process for evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan and its reasonable alternatives. The process is undertaken alongside plan preparation and is intended to inform decision-making by identifying, describing and evaluating potential environmental effects at an early stage.

The SEA process includes the preparation of an Environmental Report, consultation with the environmental authorities and the public, consideration of submissions received, and the integration of environmental considerations into the final plan. The Environmental Report assesses the likely significant effects of the plan and reasonable alternatives on a range of environmental topics, including biodiversity, population and human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape, and the interrelationship between these factors.

The Variation No.6 and reasonable alternatives have been assessed against a framework of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) and assessment criteria to identify the potential for significant positive and negative environmental effects. Where potential adverse effects are identified, measures to avoid, reduce or offset such effects are proposed. The SEA follows the objectives-led and iterative approach set out in relevant guidance issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)[5], ensuring that environmental considerations are integrated throughout the plan-making process and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Further details on the SEA process and requirements can be found in **Section 3**.

1.4 Purpose of this Report

This report is the Environmental Report of the SEA, which assesses the Variation No. 6. This report includes the following:

- **Section 2:** Context on the Variation No. 6;
- **Section 3:** SEA Methodology;
- **Section 4:** Identification of Environmental Issues and Opportunities and the SEOs;
- **Section 5:** Assessment of the Variation No.6 and Alternatives;
- **Section 6:** Assessment of potential Cumulative Effects;
- **Section 7:** Mitigation, Enhancement and Monitoring Measures; and
- **Section 8:** Next Steps.

[5] Environmental Protection Agency, SEA Resources and Guidance. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-resources-and-guidance-/

2.0 Proposed variation no 6

2.1 Background

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2025[6] indicates that the future planning and development of communities at a local level is being refocused to tackle Ireland's higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. Further, the NPF recognises that the 'development of onshore and offshore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enabling infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand'. Locating large energy users next to renewable energy sources and grid infrastructure will help drive down carbon footprint and net zero carbon.

In 2022 the Government published a statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy[7] which noted the following: *'Outside of Dublin, there may also be opportunities to develop additional grid capacity where private investment can co-deliver grid connection, electricity generation and demand opportunities, perhaps alongside fibre optics/telecoms infrastructure, in strategically and environmentally suitable locations close to significant national infrastructure'.* The Climate Action Plan 2025[8] seeks a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 and part of this is to be achieved by decarbonising industry and enterprise by changing how we produce, consume and design our goods and services by breaking the link between fossil fuels and economic growth.

In considering this, MCC is providing a policy framework for the protection of existing infrastructure assets and identifying a potential strategic site where co-location with a large energy user would strengthen the national grid and help in the transition to a low to zero carbon economy.

This Variation is guided by the National Planning Framework 2018 and first revision April 2025[6], the Climate Action Plan 2025[10], the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region[9], The Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy 2022[7], the Meath Climate Action Plan 2024[10], Eirgrids Data Centre Connection Offer Process and Policy Version 3 (2026)[11], the Large Energy-User Action Plan 2026 published by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment[12] and the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030[1], as varied.

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[6] Government of Ireland (2025) National Planning Framework. Available at: https://www.npf.ie/

[7] Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (2022) Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy. Available at: https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/government-statement-on-role-of-data-centres-in-enterprise-strategy.html

[8] Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2025) Climate Action Plan 2025. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/

[9] Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (2019) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031. Available at: https://www.emra.ie/rses/

[10] Meath County Council (2024) Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. Available at: https://www.meath.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2024-02/Climate%20Action%20Plan%202024%20-%202029_0.pdf

[11] Eirgrid (2026) Date Centre Connection Offer Process and Policy Version 3. Available at: https://www.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Data-Centre-Technical-Assessment-May-2026.pdf

[12] Government of Ireland (2026) Large Energy-User Action Plan. Available at: https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/leap-large-energy-user-action-plan.pdf

2.2 Variation No.6 Work to Date

Prior to undertaking the SEA, MCC commissioned an assessment to establish the optimum locations to position a potential Energy Park, to support the development of Variation No.6.

This work, alongside the utilisation of policy guidance, have helped to shape the Variation No. 6 and its objectives. Further details on the potential Energy Park locations can be found in **Section 5.3**.

2.3 Proposed Variation No. 6

Table 2-1 sets out the sections in the CDP that are proposed to be amended as part of the Variation No. 6.

Table 2-1: Proposed Variation No.6

MCDP 2021-2030 Chapter	Section/Table/Policy Objective/Figure	Proposed Change
Chapter 6: Infrastructure Strategy	Add section 6.15.4.1 (b) Substations	Add a list of substations in the County
	Amend section 6.15.4.2	Update in relation to North-South interconnector
	Add section 6.15.4.3 Green Energy Parks	Add a paragraph in relation to Green Energy Parks
		Add a number of objectives EP OBJ 1-6
Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives	Section 11.8.7 Large Energy Users	New objectives (LEU 1 and 2) in relation to the assessment of large energy users with reference back to objectives and guidance in Chapter 6
	Section 11.14.6 Land Use Zoning Categories	Amendments to TU Transport and Utility Infrastructure zoning objective and guidance
Volume 3: Book of Maps	Volume 3 Book of Maps	New Map 12 Woodlands Energy Park added

The proposed changes to the CDP chapters have been outlined below. The changes to the text are indicated as follows: new text is in blue and deleted text will have a ~~strikethrough~~.

2.3.1 Proposed Variation to Chapter 6: Infrastructure Strategy

Section 6.15.4.1 (b) Energy Assets: Substations

The following is a list of substations in the County from 38kV up to 400kV:

38 kv Substations

Number	Name
1	Kilcock 38kV Substation
2	Academy Street 38kV Substation
3	Abbeylands 38kV Substation
4	Lloyd 38 kV Substation
5	Kells 38kV Substation
6	Oldcastle 38kV Substation
7	Indaver 38kV Substation
8	Ashbourne 38kV Substation
9	Julianstown 38kV Substation
10	Randalstown 38kV Substation
11	Trim 38kV Substation
12	Duleek 38kV Substation
13	Athboy 38kV Substation
14	Kingscourt 38kV Substation
15	Clarkstown 38kV Substation
16	Slane 38 kV Substation

110kV-400kV Substations

Number	Name	Voltage
1	Kinnegad 110kV	110
2	Platin Substation	110
3	Woodland 400kV Transmission Substation	400
4	Portan Converter Station	400
5	Gorman 220kV Substation	220
6	Navan 110kV Substation	110
7	Baltrasna 110kV Substation	110
8	Meath Hill 110kV Substation	110
9	Knockumber (1) 110kV Substation	110
10	Clonee 220kV Substation	220
11	Bracetown 220kV Substation	220
12	Garballagh 110 kV Substation	110
13	Oldbridge 110 kV Substation	110
14	Blundelstown 110 kV Substation	110
15	Ballymacarney 110 kV Substation	110
16	Muckerstown 110 kV Substation	110

Source: OSM Data

Section 6.15.4.2 North-South Interconnector

Planning permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála for the sections in Counties Meath, Cavan and Monaghan in December 2016. ~~Following a successful legal challenge, planning permission for the northern section of the interconnector has been delayed.~~ In 2026 Eirgrid is in the process of writing to landowners along the route in respect of the placing of infrastructure on or across their lands.

Section 6.15.4.3 Green Energy Parks

In 2026, electricity demand has never been higher however there are already times when renewable energy in Ireland cannot be deployed because of limitations in the electrical grid. When this happens Eirgrid must curtail renewable generation and allow fossil fuel plants to supply the shortfall. In 2023, the total wind dispatch down lost energy in Ireland was 10.7% which was an increase from 8.5% in 2022[13]. In 2025 this figure had rose to 11.4% thus there is a trend upwards. Increased electricity demand has coincided with a challenging environment for the delivery of grid infrastructure and new generation facilities. The pace at which new electricity demand is being sought by large energy users is faster than the pace of network infrastructure delivery and the development of new generation capacity. Consequently, developing more renewable power is just one part of enabling Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy; we also need to protect and develop our electricity grid to accommodate it.

Green energy parks provide a potential solution to strengthen the electricity grid and optimise the deployment of renewables. They propose bringing together renewable power (wind/solar etc), energy storage and other grid support infrastructure on a single site close to a high-capacity grid access point, such as a substation. They integrate multiple renewable energy sources and storage solutions like batteries and have potential to co-locate with large energy users such as data centres, all connected to the grid at a single point. In doing so, it can optimise the storage and deployment of renewable electricity across the electricity grid in the region. Woodland Energy Park has been identified as a potential location to develop a low carbon energy park in County Meath primarily due to its location adjacent to the 400kV Woodland substation and the East West Interconnector station. Woodland Energy Park has been identified as a strategic location suitable for the co-location of large energy users with energy grid infrastructure. Large energy users require a reliable, high-capacity energy supply

[13] Annual Renewable Energy Constraint and Curtailment report 2023, April 2024, Eirgrid.

and include data centres, distribution centres, life sciences etc. The role of data centres in our economy is highlighted in the Programme for Government 2025, which outlines an ambition to facilitate data centre growth in the context of efficient grid usage and a reduction in carbon emissions, among other factors. Further policy on data centres is set down in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

EP OBJ 1: To support and promote the protection, improvement and expansion of the energy infrastructure assets identified in section 6.15.4.1 (b) as critical to the economic development of the County.

EP OBJ 2: To support and facilitate the development of a low carbon Green Energy Park at Woodlands adjacent to the existing 400kV substation and East West Interconnector station that integrates renewable energy generation, storage solutions and grid infrastructure while co-locating with large energy users (Volume 3, Map 12 refers).

EP OBJ 3: To require the submission of a supporting statement with any planning application on lands identified at Woodlands for a Green Energy Park demonstrating how the development constitutes a 'large energy user' and the suitability of the development at the location.

EP OBJ 4: To provide a dedicated direct access point from the Green Energy Park at Woodlands to the R154 to ensure seamless, safe and efficient transportation logistics for construction and operational phases.

EP OBJ 5: To allow for agricultural uses such as vertical farms that are complementary to the development of the lands identified for a Green Energy Park at Woodlands.

EP OBJ 6: To require that development on the TU zoned lands at Woodland Energy Park is informed by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, including hydraulic modelling of all watercourses within the lands, and applies the sequential approach such that:

1 highly vulnerable development, including substations, generation plant, energy storage and large energy user buildings, is located in Flood Zone C;

2 a riparian setback of not less than 30metres from top of bank is maintained either side of all watercourses, in accordance with INF OBJ 38 of this Plan, free of development other than water-compatible uses and essential crossings;

3 less vulnerable elements, such as solar arrays, are only located in Flood Zones A or B where flood depths are shallow and there is no loss of floodplain storage or conveyance; and

4 surface water is managed through SuDs to greenfield runoff rates.

Any new or altered watercourse crossing would also require consent from the OPW.

2.3.2 Proposed Variation to Chapter 11: Development Management Standards and Land Use Zoning Objectives

Section 11.14.6 Land Use Zoning Categories

TU Transport, ~~and~~ Utility and Energy Infrastructure (including energy generation, storage and large energy user industry)

Objective: To provide for essential transport, ~~and public~~ utilities and infrastructure including rail stations, park and ride facilities, energy infrastructure (including energy generation, storage, digital infrastructure and large energy user industry), water and wastewater infrastructure, electricity, gas and telecommunications infrastructure.

Guidance

These lands have been identified to provide for essential ~~public~~ transport and utility infrastructure including green energy parks. The nature of these facilities is such that the use of the lands is dedicated to the provision, ~~and~~ maintenance and expansion of this infrastructure. It is acknowledged however that there are instances where additional uses may be appropriate. This would ~~primarily~~ relate to rail stations and park and ride facilities close to or within town centres where additional commercial uses may be acceptable and the co-location of large energy users adjacent to existing energy generation assets such as high capacity substations. Applications for a commercial/mixed use/green energy park/large energy user on such lands will be assessed on a case by case basis and will be required to demonstrate that such a use would be compatible to the location and would not undermine the primary use of the land which is to provide essential infrastructure and services. Any application for a large energy user must include a supporting statement demonstrating how the development constitutes a 'large energy user' and the suitability of the development at the location.

Section 11.8.7 Large Energy Users

This section sets down objectives that apply when assessing applications for large energy users. Applications for large energy users should have regard to Eirgrids Data Centre Connection Offer Process and Policy Version 3 published in May 2026 and the Large Energy-User Action Plan published by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. Further objectives can be found in Chapter 6, section 6.15.4.3 Green Energy Parks in relation to the co-location of large energy users with grid infrastructure.

LEU OBJ 1: Require all planning applications for large energy users to be accompanied by a Development Statement addressing:

- Anticipated electrical and gas demand profile (peak MW, annual MWh).
- Grid operator engagement and confirmation of capacity solution.
- Renewable energy procurement and decarbonisation pathway.
- Efficiency plans.
- Heat-reuse feasibility and identified off-takers.
- Water demand and cooling technology specification.
- Connectivity (fibre and network resilience).
- Environmental, transport, and biodiversity assessments.
- Site specific flood risk assessment and surface water management strategy.
- Decommissioning and community benefit commitments.

LEU OBJ 2: Applications for large energy users should include a supporting statement to include the following:

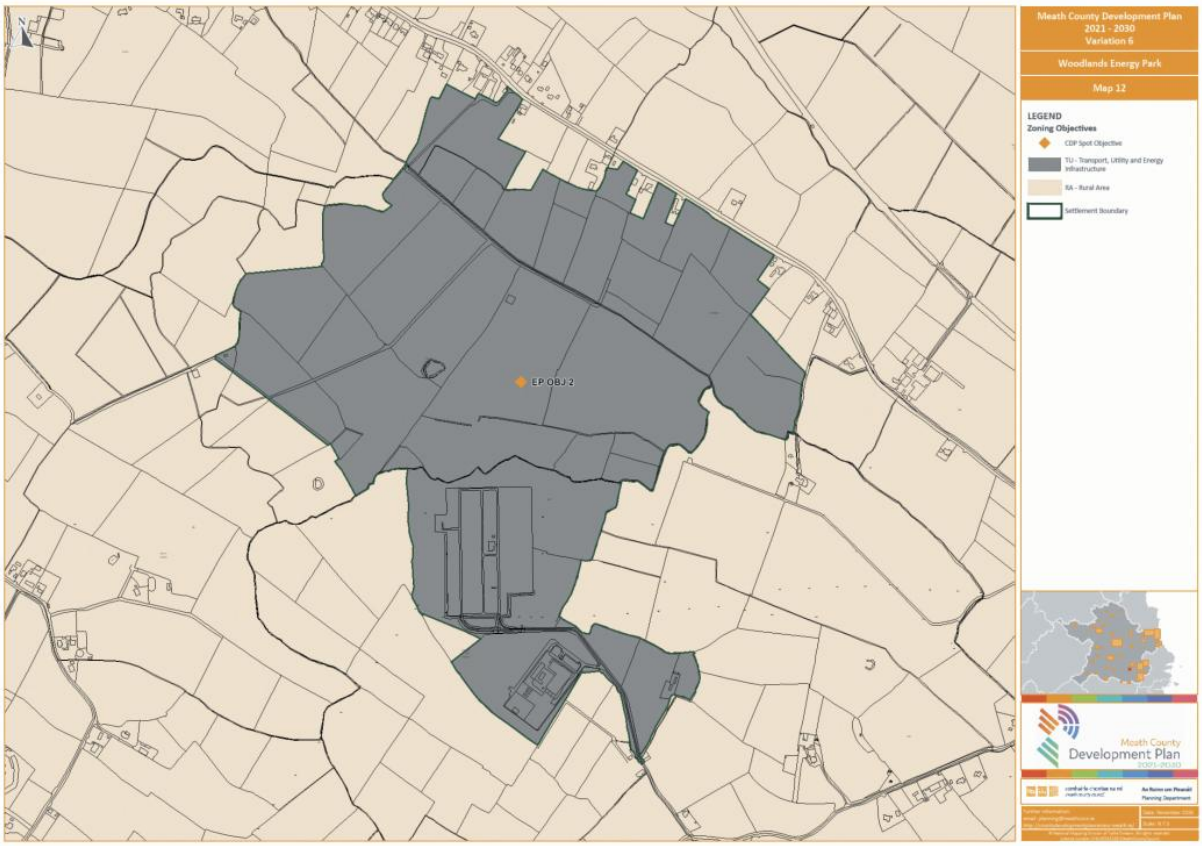
- Demonstrates how the development constitutes a large energy user;
- Demonstrate availability of firm power capacity or delivery of new capacity without adverse impact on the grid;
- Demonstrate a clear energy strategy that priorities proximate low-carbon sources, private-wire renewable generation, and/or storage in line with Government policies;
- Details measures to maximise renewable energy use, reduce lost energy from this recourse and potentially reduce redispatch costs on the grid;

- Details efficient water use, with preference for public water supply and for low-water or closed-loop cooling technologies;
- Illustrates compatibility with gas or alternative fuels infrastructure, with preference for dual-fuel or low-carbon readiness;
- Demonstrates adequate digital connectivity and network resilience;
- Details design solutions that mitigate environmental, landscape, biodiversity, noise and traffic impacts;
- Details for decommissioning and site restoration plan, and where feasible, provision for adaptive reuse.
- Identifies community benefit measures, including local employment, skills or energy and recreational initiatives that align with the local community's needs.

2.3.3 Proposed Variation to Volume 3: Book of Maps

This proposed variation includes the addition of new Map 12 Woodlands Energy Park, as outlined in Figure below.

Figure 2-1: Proposed new Map 12 - Woodlands Energy Park



3.0 Methodology

3.1 SEA Process and Requirements

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme (P/Ps) against its reasonable alternatives. SEA is undertaken during the preparation of a plan and before its adoption to ensure that environmental considerations are fully integrated into decision-making. The process provides a framework for consultation with statutory environmental authorities, stakeholders and the public and seeks to promote sustainable development through a high level of environmental protection.

Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the SEA Directive) requires Member States of the European Union to assess the likely significant environmental effects of certain plans and programmes before their adoption. The Directive ensures that environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes at an early stage, thereby supporting informed decision-making and promoting sustainable development.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

"The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment."

The SEA Directive has been transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended, and, in relation to statutory land-use planning, through the European Communities (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 456 of 2025).

As Variation No. 6 is being prepared under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2024, the SEA has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of S.I. No. 456 of 2025[14]. The assessment has been carried out alongside the preparation of the Variation in order to ensure that environmental considerations have informed its development and that the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Variation have been identified and evaluated.

In addition, a key component of the SEA process is the identification, assessment and comparison of reasonable alternatives. This enables environmental considerations to be integrated into the formulation of the proposed plan or programme and assists in selecting the most appropriate strategy having regard to environmental, social and economic considerations.

The SEA process is designed to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of plans and programmes are:

- Identified, described and evaluated at an early stage in the plan-making process;
- Considered alongside reasonable alternatives;

[14] SI. No. 456 is an updated transposition of the SEA Directive for the new planning framework established by the Planning and Development Act 2024.

- Subject to consultation with the statutory environmental authorities, prescribed bodies, stakeholders and the public;
- Taken into account by decision-makers prior to adoption of the plan or programme;
- Documented through the preparation of an SEA Statement following adoption; and
- Monitored throughout implementation of the plan or programme.

The SEA process comprises a number of key stages, including screening (where relevant), scoping, preparation of the Environmental Report, consultation, consideration of environmental issues in decision-making, publication of the SEA Statement, and monitoring of the significant environmental effects arising from implementation of the adopted plan or programme. In accordance with the SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations, the environmental assessment process includes:

"the preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision".

The findings of the SEA are presented in this Environmental Report, which documents the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed Variation and associated reasonable alternatives and identifies measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, where possible, offset significant adverse environmental effects arising from its implementation.

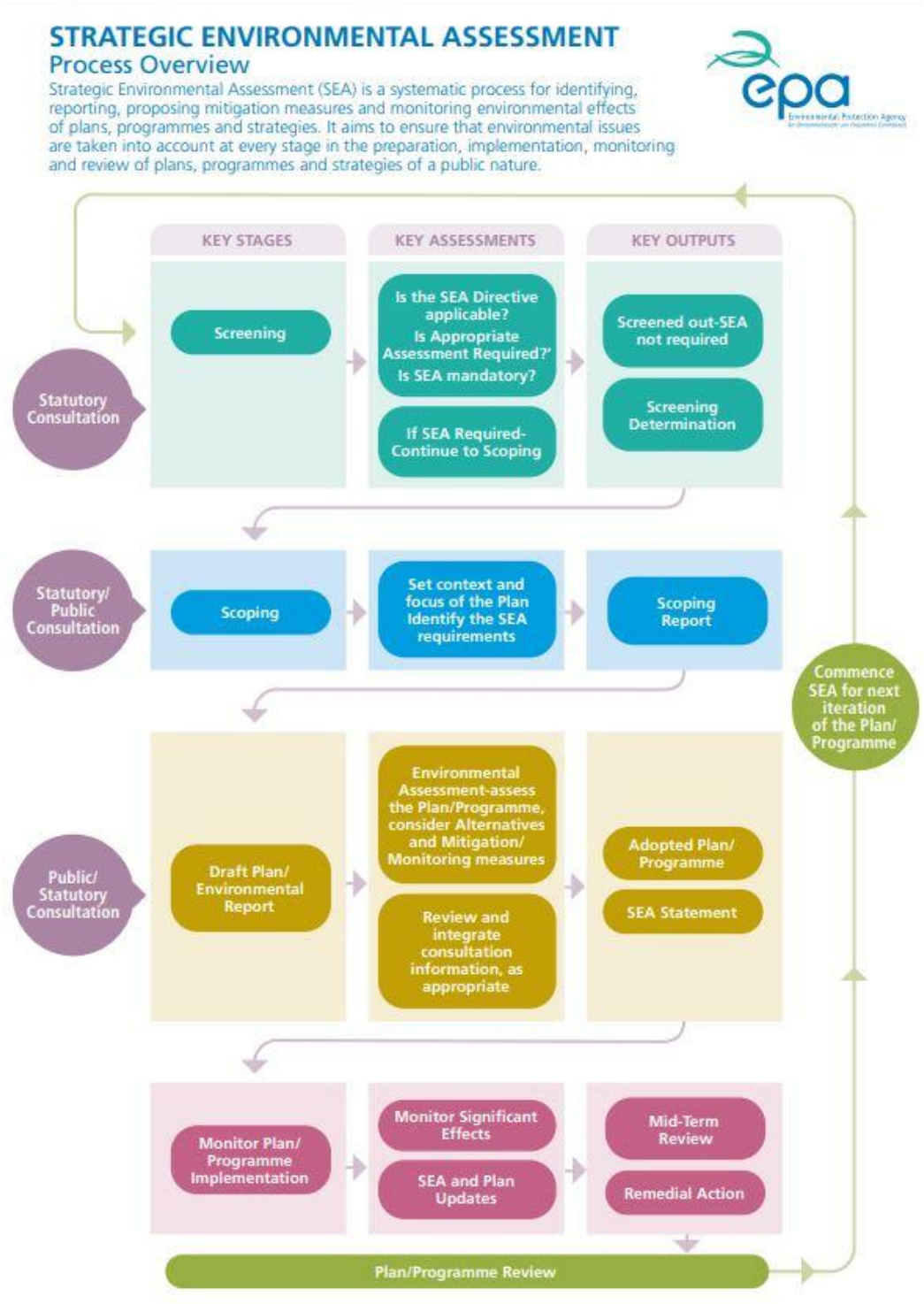
The SEA process ensures that environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes in a clear, systematic and transparent manner. In particular, the SEA process provides a structured framework for identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme and of reasonable alternatives, informed by consultation with the relevant environmental authorities, stakeholders and the public.

The SEA process typically comprises the following key stages:

- **Stage 1:** Screening, to determine whether SEA is required;
- **Stage 2:** Scoping, including consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities and establishment of the scope and level of detail of the assessment;
- **Stage 3 (Current Stage):** Preparation of the Environmental Report, including the assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the draft plan or programme and reasonable alternatives;
- **Stage 4:** Public and statutory authority consultation on the draft plan or programme and Environmental Report;
- **Stage 5:** Consideration of submissions, SEA findings and environmental considerations before adoption of the plan or programme, including the preparation of an SEA Statement; and
- **Stage 6:** Monitoring of the significant environmental effects arising from implementation of the adopted plan or programme.

The SEA process is shown in **Figure 3-1** and **Table 3-1** sets out the stages of SEA and how this SEA is meeting the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Figure 3-1: SEA Process Overview[15]



[15] Environmental Protection Agency (2021) SEA Process Flow. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-process-flow.php

Table 3-1: Fulfilling the Requirement of the SEA Regulations

What the Regulations Say[2 3]	How this is Addressed
An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Plan, and its relationship with other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives.	Set out in **Section 2** of this document.
Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the Plan.	Set out in **Section 4** of this document and in **Appendix A**.
The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected by implementation of the Plan.	**Section 4** of this document outlines the characteristics of the Variation No.6 area and identifies those areas likely to be significantly affected. These characteristics and potential interactions have been informed by the baseline information presented in **Appendix A**.
Existing environmental problems which are relevant to the Plan, including those relating to areas of particular environmental importance, such as sites designated under the Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EEC) and Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).	**Section 4** of this document provides a summary of baseline information and identifies key environmental issues relevant to the Variation No. 6. European sites and other designated environmental receptors are identified and considered throughout the assessment and in the accompanying Appropriate Assessment.
Environmental protection objectives established at international, Community and Member State level which are relevant to the Plan, and the manner in which those objectives and environmental considerations have been taken into account during preparation of the Plan.	**Section 4** and **Appendix A** outline the relevant environmental protection objectives. These objectives have informed the SEA Framework and assessment process.
The likely significant effects on the environment, including effects on biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage), landscape, and the interrelationship between these factors. The assessment should consider secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short-, medium- and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.	**Sections 5 and 6** set out the likely significant environmental effects of the Variation No. 6 and the effects of reasonable alternatives. Detailed assessment matrices are provided within **Appendix B**. Secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short-, medium- and long-term, permanent, temporary, positive and negative effects are considered throughout the assessment.

What the Regulations Say[2 3]	How this is Addressed
Measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse environmental effects arising from implementation of the Plan.	**Section 7** sets out mitigation measures and recommendations to avoid, reduce and, where possible, offset significant adverse environmental effects.
An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered and a description of how the assessment was undertaken, including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.	**Section 5** describes the alternatives considered and the reasons for their selection. **Section 3** describes the SEA methodology, while **Section 3.8** outlines any limitations, assumptions or technical difficulties encountered during the assessment.
A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of significant environmental effects resulting from implementation of the Plan.	Monitoring proposals are set out in **Section 7.4** of this document.
A non-technical summary of the information contained in the Environmental Report.	A separate **Non-Technical Summary** accompanies this Environmental Report.
Information reasonably required taking account of current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail of the Plan, the stage reached in the decision-making process, and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in order to avoid duplication.	The Environmental Report has been prepared in accordance with these requirements and presents information proportionate to the content and level of detail of the Variation No. 6.
Consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report.	A Scoping Letter was prepared and issued to the prescribed environmental authorities for comment. The responses received informed the scope and content of the Environmental Report.
Consultation with the environmental authorities and the public, providing an early and effective opportunity to express opinions on the draft Plan and accompanying Environmental Report before adoption of the Plan.	The draft Variation No. 6 and Environmental Report will be published for public consultation in accordance with statutory requirements. Submissions from environmental authorities, prescribed bodies and the public will be considered prior to adoption.
Identification and consideration of any likely significant effects on the environment of another Member State.	The assessment has considered the potential for transboundary effects. No likely significant transboundary effects have been identified.

What the Regulations Say[2 3]	How this is Addressed
Taking the Environmental Report and consultation responses into account in decision-making.	The findings of the Environmental Report and consultation responses will be considered by the competent authority prior to adoption of the Variation No. 6.
Preparation and publication of an SEA Statement explaining how environmental considerations, the Environmental Report, consultation responses and reasonable alternatives were taken into account, together with the monitoring measures adopted.	Following adoption of the Variation No. 6, an SEA Statement will be prepared and published in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
Monitoring of the significant environmental effects arising from implementation of the adopted Plan.	Monitoring arrangements are set out in **Section 7** and will be implemented following adoption of the Plan.

3.2 SEA Screening

The requirement to undertake an SEA is mandatory for certain P/Ps that are above specified thresholds. Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P/P is subject to a 'Screening process', (Stage 1) to consider if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required.

Screening for the purposes of SEA is defined as *"the determination of whether implementation of a P/P [Plan or Programme] would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P/P [Plan or Programme] requires SEA."*[16]

The criteria for screening, i.e. determining whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects are set in Annex II of the SEA Directive. The criteria are set out under two principal headings, each of which have a number of sub-criteria:

- Characteristics of a Plan; and
- Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

It is also noted that in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08[17], SEA for a P/P is also a mandatory requirement where the P/P requires Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive requires that: *"Subject to paragraph 3, an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes,*

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC, or

(b) which, in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC."

Article 4(6) of S.I. No. 456 of 2025 further states that: *"4. (6) …the competent authority shall determine whether or not the implementation of the plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2 and any submission or observation received in response to a notice under paragraph (5)"*

Draft Variation No.6 has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended. The AA Screening has concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and therefore appropriate assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Report (NIR) is required.

Therefore, in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 the Variation No.6 was also required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment10 (the SEA Directive).

The SEA Screening Determination can be found in **Appendix D**.

[16] EPA, SEA Process. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/the-sea-process/

[17] Circular Letter (2008) Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/the-sea-process/

3.3 Appropriate Assessment

Draft Variation No.6 has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992)[18] and it has been concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and a Natura Impact Report (NIR) is required. The Variation No.6 will be subject to 'Stage 2 AA' as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and an NIR has been prepared.

The NIR accompanies the Draft Variation No.6 on public display.

3.4 SEA Scoping

SEA Scoping (Stage 2) has been undertaken for consideration of the range and level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with S.I. 456/2025 – European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025. This ensured that the SEA is focused on the relevant environmental issues and examines issues at the appropriate level of detail.

It was determined that due to the nature of Variation No.6, the Scoping Report undertaken for the adopted County Development Plan was considered appropriate.

An SEA Scoping Letter Notice was issued to the following Environmental Authorities:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Applications Unit;
- Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment;
- Minister for Agriculture, Food, & the Marine;
- Adjoining planning authorities:
    - Louth County Council;
    - Monaghan County Council;
    - Cavan County Council;
    - Westmeath County Council;
    - Offaly County Council;
    - Kildare County Council; and
    - Fingal County Council.

Responses to the Scoping of the Environmental Report were received from the environmental authorities and have been incorporated into the Plan and Environmental Report. Responses are recorded within **Appendix C**.

3.5 SEA Assessment of Effects

Stage 3 (the current stage) comprises the assessment of the Variation No.6 against the SEOs identified at Scoping stage.

[18] Habitats Directive (2001) Directive 2001/42/EC. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN

The SEA Regulations require an assessment of the plan and its "reasonable alternatives", in addition to those proposed within the draft plan. Reasonable alternatives are the different options considered by the plan-maker in meeting the objectives of the plan. The assessment of reasonable alternatives does not need include all possible alternatives, but only those that are realistic.

This SEA Report covers the assessment of Variation No. 6 and its reasonable alternatives. The reasonable alternatives have all been assessed to the same level of detail.

The assessment of the Variation No.6 and alternatives have been undertaken using a consistent approach. This approach has considered the following:

- Overall potential effect significance (negative, positive, uncertain, potential for both negative and positive effect or negligible);
- Nature of effect (direct, indirect);
- Spatial Extent (local, regional, national);
- Reversibility of effect:
    - Reversible: The receptor can return to baseline condition without significant intervention; or
    - Irreversible: The receptor would require significant intervention to return to baseline condition
- Duration (short, medium or long term): Short term: 0-5 years, Medium term: 5-10 years, Long term: 10+ years.

The assessment of effects has considered the application of mitigation measures to potential effects, which has been taken into account when determining significance.

Table 3-2 sets out the key to the assessment, whilst the detailed assessment criteria are set out in **Appendix B**.

Table 3-2: Key to Assessment

Effect Significance	Description	Key
Significant positive effects	There is potential for significant positive effects upon receptors as a result of the P/P.	**++**
Minor positive effects	There is potential for minor positive effects upon receptors as a result of the P/P.	**+**
Mixed positive and negative effects	There is potential for mixed minor positive and minor negative effects upon receptors as a result of the P/P.	**+/-**
Minor negative effects	There is potential for minor negative effects upon receptors as a result of the P/P.	**-**
Significant negative effects	There is potential for significant negative effects upon receptors as a result of the P/P.	**--**
Uncertain effects	Uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine the appraisal at this stage.	**?**
Neutral	No effects are anticipated at this stage.	**0**
Direct/Indirect	Direct / Indirect	**D / I**

Effect Significance	Description	Key
Magnitude	Low / Medium / High	**L / M / H**
Duration	Short term / medium term / long term	**ST / MT / LT**
Spatial Extent	Local (County wide) / Regional (Eastern and Midland) / National (Ireland)	**L / R / N**
Permanence/Reversibility	Permanent / Temporary	**P / T**

It should be noted that where uncertain and neutral effects have been identified, it has not been possible to determine the nature of effect, the spatial extent, the reversibility or the duration of effect. This is because either insufficient information is available to reliably characterise the effect, or no discernible effect is anticipated. In these circumstances, further categorisation would be speculative and therefore, these cells have been marked N/A.

3.5.1 Assessment of Alternatives

Reasonable alternatives to Variation No.6 have been assessed as part of the SA and detailed in **Section 5.2**. Reasonable alternatives were identified by MCC as part of the Energy Generation in Meath[19] study, commissioned by MCC in April 2026.

Further details on the assessment of alternatives can be found in **Section 5.3**.

3.5.2 Cumulative Effects

The SEA Regulations require that potential cumulative effects are recorded when identifying likely significant effects. Therefore, a number of plans and policies (local, regional and national) have been reviewed for potential cumulative effects in addition to potential cumulative effects that could occur through the combination of Variation No.6 within the draft Local Plan itself.

In addition, the assessment has considered potential cumulative effects of neighbouring development sites, including those beyond the MCC boundary. The assessment has assumed that cumulative effects could be cumulative, secondary and synergistic. Potential transboundary effects have also been considered within this assessment. Potential cumulative effects have been identified in **Section 6** of this report.

3.5.3 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

The SEA Regulations require that measures are identified to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse effects on the environment that may arise from implementation of the Plan. These measures are referred to as mitigation measures.

Mitigation measures have been identified through the assessment of Variation No. 6. These include measures incorporated into the Variation to avoid adverse environmental effects at source, as well as measures designed to reduce or manage potential effects identified during the assessment process. These measures are set out in **Section 7.1** of this report.

The SEA Regulations also require the monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan. Monitoring enables the identification of unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and facilitates the undertaking of appropriate remedial action. The purpose of monitoring is to evaluate the environmental outcomes of the Plan, assess progress towards relevant environmental protection objectives, and provide information to support adaptive

[19] Infranua & Engenuiti (2026) Energy Generation in Meath

management where necessary. Monitoring also helps to address uncertainty, improve the evidence base, and enhance transparency and accountability in decision-making. The proposed monitoring programme is set out in **Section 7.2** of this report.

3.6 Assumptions and Limitations

The SEA Regulations require a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of data) encountered in compiling the required information.

Baseline data has been available for Meath, however there are cases where data gaps have been identified. These have been listed for each topic area in **Appendix A**.

The preparation of the Variation No. 6 alongside the SEA allows for an iterative process of assessment and refinement in the narrative, policies, objectives and alternatives considered in developing the plan.

The assessment has been undertaken as a desk-based exercise using GIS and the baseline information presented within the Scoping Report (**Appendix A**). No site visits have been undertaken specifically for the purposes of the SEA.

SLR have made every effort to ensure that effects are predicted accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the limited understanding of precisely how the plan will be implemented. Given uncertainties, there is inevitably a need to make assumptions. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the assessment text.

In some instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict ‘significant effects’, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft Variation No. 6 and its alternatives in more general terms.

It is also the case that some mitigation is already built into the policies / objectives, due to national policy, and existing planning constraints and protections. Where there is scope for additional mitigation or opportunities for enhancement this is identified through the SEA process.



4.0 Environmental Issues and Opportunities and the SEA Framework

4.1 Introduction

This section identifies the key environmental issues, opportunities and SEOs against which Variation No. 6 has been assessed.

Variation No. 6 comprises targeted amendments to the existing provisions of the Meath CDP 2021–2030 and does not introduce a new development strategy, alter the overall spatial planning framework for the County, or significantly change the environmental context within which the Plan operates. The Variation is therefore being prepared within the strategic policy framework already established and assessed through the SEA of the adopted County Development Plan.

Given the limited and focused nature of the proposed amendments, it is considered that the environmental baseline, key environmental issues, and review of relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives undertaken as part of the SEA of the CDP remain applicable and sufficiently robust for the purposes of assessing Variation No. 6. However, the baseline and review of plans, policies and programmes have been reviewed as part of this SEA to ensure that the baseline and relevant plans, policies and programmes have been included and updates have been made where necessary. The Variation does not give rise to materially different environmental conditions, receptors, pressures or pathways that would necessitate the development of a new baseline assessment or a revised review of plans and programmes.

Furthermore, the SEOs developed and applied through the SEA of the CDP continue to provide an appropriate assessment framework for Variation No. 6. The SEOs reflect the relevant environmental protection objectives established at international, European, national, regional and local levels and remain suitable for identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant environmental effects arising from implementation of the proposed Variation.

Accordingly, the environmental baseline, review of plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives, and associated SEOs developed for the SEA of the Meath CDP have been utilised in the assessment of Variation No. 6. Where neccessary, these have been reviewed and updated to ensure their continued applicability to the proposed amendments.

Appendix A presents the environmental baseline information and review of relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives applied in the SEA of Variation No. 6.

4.2 Review of Plans, Policies and Programmes

A plan may be influenced in various ways by other plans, policies or programmes, or by external environmental protection objectives such as those laid down in policies or legislation. These relationships enable MCC to take advantage of potential synergies and to deal with any inconsistencies and constraints.

As part of the Scoping stage, a review of policies, plans, programmes, strategies and initiatives that may have an impact on the preparation of relevant policies being reviewed as part of Variation No.6 preparation was undertaken. This review has informed the development of the SEO Framework.

A detailed outline of the policy documents, the objectives and targets is set out in **Appendix A**.

4.3 Environmental Issues

The detailed baseline data is contained within **Appendix A**. **Table 4-1** provides a summary of the key baseline environmental issues, presented by SEA topic. The information in this section and in **Appendix A**.

Table 4-1: Environmental Issues and Opportunities

SEA Topic	Issues and Opportunities
Biodiversity (including Flora and Fauna)	• Key biodiversity sensitivities are associated with the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC/SPA, Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC, Boyne Estuary SPA, River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA, North-West Irish Sea SPA, wetlands, coastal habitats, woodlands, hedgerows and ecological corridors throughout the county; • Biodiversity is under pressure from habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation associated with development, land-use change and infrastructure projects; • Ecological networks and wildlife corridors are vulnerable to disruption; • Surface water and groundwater quality can be affected by wastewater discharges, agricultural runoff and diffuse pollution; • Sensitive habitats and species may be disturbed by recreation and increased human activity. Invasive alien species, pests and diseases continue to threaten native habitats and species; • Land-use change and soil sealing reduce habitat availability and carbon sequestration. Mixed-source pollution and cumulative effects from multiple developments can impact ecosystem resilience; and • The protection and enhancement of designated sites, species, ecological networks, habitat connectivity and water quality present key opportunities.
Population and Human Health	• Strong population growth is increasing demand for housing, infrastructure, community facilities and services; • There is a need to support sustainable settlement patterns and compact growth; • Ongoing provision of recreational facilities, green infrastructure and active travel networks is important for health and wellbeing; • Flood risk, climate change impacts, radon exposure, environmental noise and infrastructure capacity constraints present challenges; and • Opportunities exist to support healthy and sustainable communities, climate resilience and improved infrastructure provision.
Land, Soils and Geology	• Meath contains extensive high-value agricultural land, important groundwater resources, quarrying areas and 31 Irish Geological Heritage sites; • Development and urban expansion can result in the loss of agricultural land and soils; • Soil sealing, degradation, contamination, erosion and compaction can reduce soil functionality and environmental quality; • Land-use change may affect soil carbon stocks and increase risks to water quality through sedimentation and contaminated runoff; • Geological heritage features, groundwater resources and aquifers are sensitive to inappropriate development and resource extraction; • Quarrying and mineral extraction can affect groundwater, hydrogeology, landscape character and environmental quality; and • Opportunities exist to protect soil resources, agricultural land, geological heritage and groundwater.
Water Quality	• Water quality issues are associated with the River Boyne catchment, River Blackwater catchment, Boyne Estuary, Nanny Estuary, coastal waters along the Irish Sea and groundwater bodies across the county. Many of these have not yet achieved Good Ecological Status under the Water Framework Directive; • Nutrient enrichment and eutrophication from agriculture, wastewater and diffuse pollution remain significant pressures; • Development, agricultural intensification, forestry and infrastructure projects can affect surface water and groundwater quality; • Pollution incidents, hydromorphological changes and pressures on coastal and transitional waters present ongoing risks; • High groundwater vulnerability areas require protection from contamination; • Flood risk management remains a key issue, particularly in relation to the Boyne, Broadmeadow, Delvin, Nanny and other river catchments, especially in the context of climate change; and • Opportunities exist to improve water quality, protect water resources and strengthen flood resilience.
Air, Noise and Climate	• Air quality may be affected by emissions from transport, agriculture and industry, with localised pressures associated with population growth and increasing traffic; • Construction activities can generate temporary dust, emissions and noise; • Environmental noise arises from roads, railways, aircraft, industry and construction activities; • Greenhouse gas emissions from transport, agriculture, buildings and energy use contribute to climate change; • Climate-related risks include flooding, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, water resource pressures and impacts on communities and infrastructure; and • Opportunities exist to reduce emissions, improve climate resilience, support sustainable transport and adapt to climate change.
Cultural Heritage	• County Meath contains internationally and nationally important heritage assets including the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, Hill of Tara, Loughcrew Cairns, Trim Castle, historic towns such as Kells, Navan, Trim and Slane, numerous protected structures and 23 Architectural Conservation Areas; • Archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage assets are vulnerable to development, infrastructure provision and land-use change; • Cultural landscapes and heritage settings may be affected by inappropriate development; • Previously unrecorded archaeology may be disturbed by excavation and construction activities;

SEA Topic	Issues and Opportunities
	• Historic buildings, protected structures, ACAs and heritage streetscapes may be affected by insensitive alterations, vacancy or neglect; • Climate change presents increasing risks through flooding, erosion, storm events and deterioration of historic fabric; and • Opportunities exist to protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets, landscapes and settings.
Landscape	• Sensitive landscapes include the Boyne Valley, coastal landscapes, river corridors, estuaries, upland and heritage landscapes, scenic views and protected prospects throughout County Meath; • Development pressure can affect landscape character, visual amenity and scenic quality, particularly within sensitive landscapes; • Highly sensitive landscapes often have limited capacity to accommodate change; • Urban expansion and infrastructure development can fragment green infrastructure and ecological corridors; • There is a need to protect landscapes that provide ecosystem services, including flood regulation, carbon storage, biodiversity support, recreation and amenity value; • Coastal development and climate change may alter landscape character through erosion, flooding and changing land uses; and • Opportunities exist to protect landscape character, scenic views, green infrastructure and ecosystem services.
Material Assets	• Population and economic growth will increase demand for water supply, wastewater treatment, transport, energy, telecommunications, waste management and utility infrastructure; • Capacity constraints in water and wastewater infrastructure may affect future development; • Continued reliance on private vehicles contributes to congestion, emissions and environmental pressures; • Achieving climate and energy targets requires investment in renewable energy, energy networks, storage and electric vehicle infrastructure; • Additional waste infrastructure and circular economy measures will be required to manage future waste generation; • Inappropriate lighting can affect amenity, landscape character and biodiversity; and • Opportunities exist to improve infrastructure resilience, resource efficiency, digital connectivity and sustainable transport provision.

4.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework

The review of relevant plans, policies and programmes, collation of baseline information and identification of issues has been used to inform the SEOs, which are set out in **Table 4-2**. The SEOs are used to identify the potential environmental effects of the Variation No. 6 and its alternatives.

Table 4-2: SEA Objectives

SEA Topic	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)	**B_1:** Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.
Population and Human Health	**PHH_1:** Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.
	PHH_2: Protect human health and wellbeing.
Soils and Geology	**SG_1:** Safeguard sensitive soil resources.
Water Quality	**W_1:** Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.
Air Quality and Noise	**AN_1:** Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.
	AN_2: Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.
Climate Change	**CC_1:** Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.
Material Assets	**MA_1:** Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.
Cultural Heritage	**CH_1:** Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.
Landscape and Visual	**LV_1:** Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.

5.0 Assessment of Variation No. 6

5.1 Introduction

The assessment of the Variation No. 6 is summarised below and presented in full in **Appendix B**. A matrix approach has been used for the assessment which has used the significance criteria identified in **Table 3-2**, with a detailed criteria presented in **Appendix B**.

An overview of the performance of the Variation No. 6 against each SEO within the SEA Framework and summary of potential significant effects against each SEO objective has been presented below. For the purpose of the SEA, significant effects are deemed to be the following:

- Significant positive effects;
- Significant negative effects; and
- Uncertain effects.

Whilst the identification of uncertain effects is considered to be significant, due to the strategic, high level of assessment, uncertain effects are likely to be addressed as individual development schemes arise. The implementation of mitigation outlined in Section 7.3 also aids in mitigating uncertain effects.

Appendix B sets out the nature of effects such as magnitude, spatial extent and duration. Details on mitigation measures from other CDP policies have also been outlined in **Appendix B**, alongside additional mitigation measures put forward to address potential negative and uncertain effects.

Further details on potential insignificant effects, i.e. minor positive, minor negative and neutral effects, are also detailed in **Appendix B**.

5.2 Assessment of Variation No. 6

Table 5-1 provides an overview of the performance of proposed policies against each SEO objective and **Table 5-2** outlines significant effects based on each SEO objective within the SEA Framework.

Table 5-1: Overview of Variation No. 6 Findings

Variation No.6 Objectives	SA Objectives										
	Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)	Population	Human Health	Soils and Geology	Water Quality	Air Quality	Noise	Climate Change	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape and Visual
	B_1	PHH_1	PHH_2	SG_1	W_1	AN_1	AN_2	CC_1	MA_1	CH_1	LV_1
EP OBJ 1	?	+	0	-	0	0	0	++	++	?	+/-
EP OBJ 2	-	+	0	-	0	+/-	-	++	++	?	-
EP OBJ 3	0	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0
EP OBJ 4	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	0	+	0	-
EP OBJ 5	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	?
EP OBJ 6	++	0	0	+	++	0	0	++	++	0	+
LEU OBJ 1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	0	0
LEU OBJ 2	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	+/-	++	0	+

Table 5-2: Summary of Variation No. 6 Significant Effects

SEA Objective	Significant Effects			Summary of Effects
	++	--	?	
B_1: Biodiversity	1	0	1	One significant positive effect has been identified, for EP OBJ 6 as this objective contributes to directly protecting aquatic habitats, bankside flora, and riparian ecological corridors throughout the Woodland Energy Park landbank, as well as contributing to safeguarding ecological connectivity and supporting protected aquatic and terrestrial species. One uncertain effect has been identified for EP OBJ 1, as effects upon biodiversity are likely to be determined by the location and scale of development that may arise.
PHH_1: Population	1	0	0	One significant positive effect has been identified for LEU OBJ 2. This objective contributes to benefitting the community through mitigating noise and traffic impacts, providing employment opportunities and recreational opportunities.
PHH_2: Human Health	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for human health. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
SG_1: Soils and Geology	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for soils and geology. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
W_1: Water Quality	1	0	0	One significant positive effect has been identified, for EP OBJ 6 as this objective results in the preservation of local hydrological regimes, hydromorphology, and water quality.
AN_1: Air Quality	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for air quality. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
AN_2: Noise	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for noise. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
CC_1: Climate Change	4	0	0	Potential significant positive effects have been identified for four objectives, where these objectives contribute to safeguarding critical low-carbon generation, storage, and grid assets against climate change effects, improving climatic resilience.

SEA Objective	Significant Effects			Summary of Effects
	++	--	?	
MA_1: Material Assets	5	0	0	Potential significant positive effects have been identified for five objectives, as these objectives safeguard, maintain, and enhance strategic high-voltage energy transmission infrastructure identified as critical to county and regional economic resilience. This is anticipated to support the development of new infrastructure to support Meath's future needs.
CH_1: Cultural Heritage	0	0	2	Two uncertain effects have been identified for EP OBJ 1 and EP OBJ 2 as there is potential for development and expansion of energy infrastructure to result in effects upon heritage assets depending upon the location and expansion of infrastructure. Effects are likely to be determined by individual schemes that may arise.
LV_1: Landscape and Visual	0	0	1	One uncertain effect has been identified for EP OBJ 5 as there is potential for alterations to local landscape character and visual amenity from the implementation of vertical farming. However, effects are likely to be determined by individual scheme design.

5.3 Assessment of Alternatives

The SEA Regulations require an assessment of the plan and its “reasonable alternatives”. The assessment of reasonable alternatives does not need include all possible alternatives, but only those that are realistic.

As part of the development of the Variation No. 6, MCC commissioned an assessment to establish optimum location to position a potential Energy Park to accommodate Large Energy Users, with specific reference to capitalising on the existing infrastructure and capacity within the area and minimising the potential for lost energy.

Following an initial assessment of at least 32 sites to determine existing and planned energy infrastructure developments within the County, four sites were identified for detailed study. Located at Woodland, Kinnegad, Meath Hill and Gorman, these sites were selected for consideration with Large Energy Users in mind, based on proximity to suitable energy/lost energy and other infrastructure and geographical dispersion. Any existing or permitted substations with surrounding lands that are zoned were not highlighted as part of this study as these have already undergone infrastructure and constraints assessments as part of the zoning process.

In May of this year and following on from the publication of the Energy Study, Meath County Council invited expressions of interest for lands suitable for zoning for the purposes of a Green Energy park. The responses were evaluated having regard to the same multi-assessment criteria set down in the Energy study.

In addition to energy and other infrastructure (water, gas, wastewater, fibre,) further criteria were considered such as proximity to transport/roads/airports and general planning criteria such as landscape character and capacity, flooding, archaeology, groundwater vulnerability and density of existing surrounding development were also considered.

The assessment of alternative sites has been undertaken utilising the same method and level of detail as the preferred site allocations. Findings of the alternatives site assessment have been summarised below in **Table 5-3** and presented in full in **Appendix B**.

Overall, the assessment of alternative sites have resulted in fewer significant positive effects when compared to the Woodlands location. In line with this, there are more significant negative effects as a result of the alternative sites. In line with this, there are also more minor negative effects associated with alternative sites, and fewer minor positive effects associated with alternative sites in comparison to the preferred Woodlands site.

Table 5-3 provides an overview of the performance of alternative sites against each SEO objective and **Table 5-4** outlines significant effects based on each SEO objective within the SEA Framework.

Table 5-3: Overview of Alternative Sites Findings

Alternative Sites	SA Objectives										
	Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)	Population	Human Health	Soils and Geology	Water Quality	Air Quality	Noise	Climate Change	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape and Visual
	B_1	PHH_1	PHH_2	SG_1	W_1	AN_1	AN_2	CC_1	MA_1	CH_1	LV_1
Woodland (Preferred Site)	-	+	0	-	+	+/-	-	++	+	0	0
Meath Hill	-	+	0	-	-	+/-	-	++	+/-	0	--
Kinnegad	-	+	0	-	-	+/-	-	+	+	0	0
Gorman	-	+	0	-	--	+/-	-	?	+/-	0	--

Table 5-4: Summary of Alternative Sites Significant Effects

SEA Objective	Significant Effects			Summary of Effects
	++	--	?	
B_1: Biodiversity	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for biodiversity. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
PHH_1: Population	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for population. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
PHH_2: Human Health	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for human health. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
SG_1: Soils and Geology	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for soils and geology. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
W_1: Water Quality	0	1	0	Gorman has resulted in potential significant negative effects upon water quality as water availability at the site is a severe constraint. Furthermore, groundwater sensitivity is considered to be extreme, meaning there is potential risk from construction works to result in contamination.
AN_1: Air Quality	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for air quality. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
AN_2: Noise	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for noise. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
CC_1: Climate Change	2	0	1	Woodlands and Meath Hill have both resulted in potential significant positive effects on climate change as this site provides a major strategic climate benefit by absorbing excess regional renewable generation, reducing curtailment, and supporting national decarbonisation targets. Gorman has resulted in uncertain effects on climate change as the site provides flexible demand, storage, or co-located industrial users and assists in absorbing excess regional renewable generation and supporting climate action objectives. However, lands adjacent to the substation are designated within Flood Zone A, posing a significant direct risk of fluvial and pluvial flooding.

SEA Objective	Significant Effects			Summary of Effects
	++	--	?	
MA_1: Material Assets	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for material assets. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
CH_1: Cultural Heritage	0	0	0	No significant effects have been identified for cultural heritage. Full details of effects can be found in **Appendix B**.
LV_1: Landscape and Visual	0	2	0	Meath Hill and Gorman have resulted in potential significant negative effects upon landscape and visual. These sites are located in areas of high landscape sensitivity and therefore the introduction of large-scale industrial structures near sensitive receptors is anticipated to result in negative effects on visual amenities.

6.0 Cumulative Effects

6.1 Introduction

The SEA Regulations require that cumulative effects are considered when identifying likely significant effects. The assessment of cumulative effects has considered potential cumulative effects of neighbouring development sites, including those beyond the MCC boundary. The assessment has assumed that cumulative effects could be cumulative, secondary and synergistic. Potential transboundary effects have also been considered within this assessment.

Cumulative effects arise, for instance:

- Where multiple individual policies and/or sites have a combined effect on an objective; or
- Where multiple policies and/or sites individually have insignificant effects but together have a significant effect.

The significance of cumulative effects resulting from a range of activities, or multiple incidences of one activity, may vary based on factors such as the nature of the proposed sites and policies and the sensitivity of the receiving communities and environment.

This section therefore presents the findings of the following:

- **Intra-plan effects:** Consideration of how different proposed policies and sites within the Local Plan may interact and cause cumulative effects on a receptor; and
- **Inter-plan and project effects:** How the proposed policies and sites within the Local Plan could result in cumulative effects in association with other plans, policies and projects in the surrounding area.

The potential significant intra-plan cumulative effects are identified in **Table 6-1**, whilst the potential significant inter-plan cumulative effects are identified in **Table 6-3**. Potential cumulative effects have also been identified within **Appendix B**.

6.2 Intra-plan effects

Table 6-1: Potential Significant Intra-Plan Cumulative Effects Summary

SEA Objective	Positive	Negative	Uncertain	Source	Description of Effects
B_1: Biodiversity	0	0	3	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6	There is potential for cumulative pressures to arise through the interaction of EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, and development facilitated by LEU OBJ 1-2, which collectively support energy infrastructure and large energy user development. However, these effects are moderated by the environmental safeguards, flood risk management measures and biodiversity protections embedded within EP OBJ 6. There is uncertainty on how these policies may interact.
PHH_1: Population	1			LEU OBJ 2	Positive cumulative effects would be generated through the coordinated implementation of EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 4 and LEU OBJ 2, which support sustainable economic growth, employment opportunities, infrastructure provision and community benefits. Improved energy resilience and access to strategic infrastructure are also expected to contribute positively to population and communities.
PHH_2: Human Health	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
SG_1: Soils and Geology	0	2	0	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2	Negative intra-cumulative effects are identified through the interaction of EP OBJ 1 and EP OBJ 2. Together, these objectives facilitate energy infrastructure and Green Energy Park development which may result in the permanent loss of soils, increased areas of hardstanding, ground disturbance and soil compaction associated with construction activities. The concentration of development within the Energy Park has the potential to increase pressure on soil resources compared to the implementation of either objective in isolation.
W_1: Water Quality	1	1	0	LEU OBJ 2 (+), EP OBJ 6 (-)	Interactions between EP OBJ 2 and associated development objectives could generate cumulative pressures on water resources and surface water runoff. However, EP OBJ 6 works cumulatively with all development-focused policies to ensure water quality protection, sustainable drainage, flood risk management and climate adaptation measures are integrated into future development proposals.
AN_1: Air Quality	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
AN_2: Noise	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
CC_1: Climate Change	5	0	1	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6, LEU OBJ 1 (+) LEU OBJ 2 (?)	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, and LEU OBJ 1 collectively promote renewable energy generation, decarbonisation and energy security, while EP OBJ 6 supports climate adaptation through flood risk management and resilient infrastructure design. Together, the policies create a strongly positive cumulative effect for CC_1. LEU OBJ 2 has the potential to interact with other policies within the CDP and may result in increased fossil fuel usage, resulting in increased greenhouse gases and reduced climate resilience.
MA_1: Material Assets	5	0	0	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6, LEU OBJ 1, LEU OBJ 2	Significant positive cumulative interactions occur between EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 3, LEU OBJ 1 and LEU OBJ 2. These policies work together to maximise the efficient use of strategic energy infrastructure, encourage co-location of complementary development and ensure that infrastructure capacity is considered from the outset of the development process.
CH_1: Cultural Heritage	0	0	1	EP OBJ 1	An uncertain intra-cumulative effect has been identified in relation to EP OBJ 1. The policy supports strategic energy infrastructure which may have the potential to interact with known or unrecorded/unknown archaeological assets, historic landscapes or cultural heritage features. Given the strategic nature of the policy, the location and extent of any future works are not yet known, resulting in uncertainty regarding the significance of effects.
LV_1: Landscape and Visual	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified

6.3 Inter-plan effects

Table 6-2 outlines the sources of potential inter-plan and project cumulative effects, whilst **Table 6-3** details the potential cumulative effects identified for each of the SA topics in relation to these policies and plans.

Table 6-2: Sources of Inter-Plan and Project Effects

Policy or Plan	Plan Details
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework and National Development Plan	Sets the overarching national spatial growth, housing and infrastructure investment strategy, directly influencing the regional distribution of land use and major capital projects.
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 for the Eastern and Midland Region	The RSES provides the regional framework for economic and spatial planning, aligning country-level development with regional growth targets, energy transitions and infrastructure zoning.
National Climate Action Plan	The National Climate Action Plan implements statutory carbon budgets and emissions ceilings by sector, driving the clean energy transition, grid decarbonisation and deployment of renewable energy technologies.
National Policy Statement on Electricity Interconnection and National Energy Policy Frameworks	These frameworks and their overarching statement guide the strategic development of high-voltage transmission networks, interconnectors and the energy storage required for national supply security.
National Smart Metering programme and Grid Development Strategies (EirGrid / ESB Networks)	These programme and associated policy frameworks dictate the pace and level of modernisation, capacity enhancement and the flexibility requirements for Ireland’s national electricity grid.
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland	The RBMP implements the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive, establishing catchment-specific objectives for the protection of water quality, ecological status improvement and pollution abatement.
National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management	This programme directs national and regional flood risk management policies, mapping Zone A and B flood extents and enforcing sequential land-use planning principles and implementation.
Transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and National Sustainable Mobility Policy	These strategies and policy integrate regional transport, active travel and public transport investment frameworks with the aim of promoting modal shifts and managing traffic-related emissions.

Policy or Plan	Plan Details
Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan	The National Biodiversity Action Plan establishes national targets and conservation objectives for protecting terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, as well as halting species decline.
Neighbouring County Development Plans	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The neighbouring plans include: • Fingal County Development Plan 2023- 2029; • Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029; • Westmeath County Development Plan 2021- 2027; • Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028; • Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027; • Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028; • Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027; • Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027; and • Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025.
Infrastructure projects	There are a number of infrastructure projects in the surrounding area that have potential to interact with the Variation No.6: • North-South 400kV Interconnector: High voltage overhead transmission line connecting the existing Woodland 400kV Substation in Meath to Turleenan (Co. Tyrone); • Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade: Major EirGrid transmission infrastructure project which will link the Dunstown 400kV Substation in Co. Kildare to the Woodland 400kV Substation; • Belcamp to Woodlands 400kV/220kV Cable Route: Strategic grid infrastructure connecting north Dublin electricity nodes directly to Woodland substation hub; • Gunnocks/Bracetown Permitted 220kV Substation and Indistrial/Data centre Developments: Future planned and permitted GIS substation and associated large-scale energy user / tech park expansions in the Bracetown/Clonee corridor; • Regional Solar PV and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Clusters: Utility-scale farms and grid-scale BESS applications which are currently progressing through the planning pipeline across south-east Meath which are designed to tie into local 110kV/220kV nodes; • Meath Hill Wind Energy Portfolio Expansion: Future onshore wind farm grid connections planned for the Meath Hill / north-east Meath corridor; and • Uisce Éireann Water and Wastewater Network Upgrades: Future capacity expansions for water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure in Batterstown, Dunshaugh and the surrounding catchments to support regional economic growth.

Table 6-3: Potential Significant Inter-Plan Cumulative Effects Summary

SEA Objective	Positive	Negative	Uncertain	Source	Description of Effects
B_1: Biodiversity	0	0	3	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6	There is potential for cumulative pressures to arise through the interaction of the Variation No.6, which collectively support energy infrastructure and large energy user development. However, these effects are moderated by the environmental safeguards, flood risk management measures and biodiversity protections embedded within EP OBJ 6. There is uncertainty on how these policies may interact with other plans and policies and projects.
PHH_1: Population	1			LEU OBJ 2	Positive cumulative effects would be generated through the coordinated implementation of the Variation No.6, which support sustainable economic growth, employment opportunities, infrastructure provision and community benefits. The Variation No.6, alongside other plans and policies and projects is anticipated to contribute to improved energy resilience and access to strategic infrastructure, as well as contribute positively to population and communities.
PHH_2: Human Health	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
SG_1: Soils and Geology	0	2	0	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2	Negative inter-cumulative effects are identified through the interaction of Variation No.6 with other plans and policies and projects (including neighbouring CDPs and infrastructure projects). Together, these objectives facilitate energy infrastructure and development which may result in the permanent loss of soils, increased areas of hardstanding, ground disturbance and soil compaction associated with construction activities.
W_1: Water Quality	1	1	0	LEU OBJ 2 (+), EP OBJ 6 (-)	Interactions between Variation No.6 with other plans and policies and projects and associated development could generate cumulative pressures on water resources and surface water runoff. However, there is potential for water quality protection, sustainable drainage, flood risk management and climate adaptation measures are integrated into future development proposals if implemented across multiple developments.
AN_1: Air Quality	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
AN_2: Noise	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified
CC_1: Climate Change	5	0	1	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6, LEU OBJ 1 (+) LEU OBJ 2 (?)	Variation No.6, alongside other plans and policies collectively promote renewable energy generation, decarbonisation and energy security, while EP OBJ 6 supports climate adaptation through flood risk management and resilient infrastructure design. LEU OBJ 2 has the potential to interact with other plans and policies and projects and may result in increased fossil fuel usage, resulting in increased greenhouse gases and reduced climate resilience.
MA_1: Material Assets	5	0	0	EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, EP OBJ 6, LEU OBJ 1, LEU OBJ 2	Significant positive cumulative interactions occur between Variation No.6 and other plans and policies and projects. These policies and projects work together to maximise the efficient use of strategic energy infrastructure, as well as improving infrastructure capacity for future populations.
CH_1: Cultural Heritage	0	0	1	EP OBJ 1	An uncertain intra-cumulative effect has been identified in relation to EP OBJ 1 and other plans and projects that may result in development. There is potential for multiple developments to interact with known or unrecorded/unknown archaeological assets, historic landscapes or cultural heritage features, depending on the location of development.
LV_1: Landscape and Visual	0	0	0	None identified	No effects identified

7.0 Mitigation and Monitoring

7.1 Introduction

Mitigation of significant negative and uncertain effects of the plan and enhancement of positive effects are a key purpose of SEA. The SEA Regulations require that mitigation measures are considered to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan. The measures are known as 'mitigation' measures. Mitigation measures include both proactive avoidance of adverse effects and actions taken after potential effects are identified.

Mitigation provided by other CDP policies have been outlined within **Appendix B** and outlined in **Section 7.2**.

Additional mitigation measures proposed have been identified in **Section 7.3** and are designed to avoid or reduce the effects identified as potentially negative and uncertain in the proposed policy and site assessments against the SEO objectives within the SEA Framework. This also includes enhancement measures, that aim to optimise positive impacts and enhance the environmental performance of the plan.

The term 'residual effects' refers to any effect that remains after mitigation. Residual significant effects require monitoring to ensure that appropriate remedial action is taken, if necessary. **Section 7.3** outlines the identified significant residual effects.

Significant residual effects will require monitoring. Further details of the proposed monitoring measures are provided in **Section 7.4**.

7.2 Mitigating Policies

The following CDP policies have provided mitigation measures for Variation No.6. These have been outlined below and detailed in full in Appendix B:

- HER POL 27 - 41;
- HER OBJ 30 - 40;
- HER POL 47;
- HER POL 48;
- INF OBJ 74;
- INF OBJ 38;
- HER POL 44-46;
- HER OBJ 44-45
- INF POL 19-25;
- HER POL 1-26;
- HER OBJ 1-29;
- HER POL 49-52; and
- HER OBJ 46-50.

7.3 Additional Mitigation Measures

The preparation of Variation No. 6 was undertaken in parallel with the SEA and AA processes, ensuring that environmental considerations informed the Variation from the

outset. The integrated assessments identified potential environmental effects arising from the scale and nature of the proposed Green Energy Park and specific mitigation measures were proposed.

The SEA has proposed the following additional policy wording:

Policy LEU POL 1

To ensure that large energy user development, including extensions and intensification of existing facilities, achieves high standards of energy and water efficiency, environmental protection and resource management.

- **LEU OBJ 3a**: To require energy-efficient design and operation, including cooling and associated plant, and demonstration of anticipated annual and peak electricity demand and energy-efficiency performance
- **LEU OBJ 3b**: To require 80% of annual operational electricity consumption in line with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (Large Energy User Connection Policy, 2025) and compliance of emissions with legislation and EPA guidelines.
- **LEU OBJ 3c**: To require compliance with applicable electricity connection requirements while promoting measures, where feasible and consistent with grid operator requirements, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and improve alignment with renewable generation, including appropriate storage and demand flexibility.
- **LEU OBJ 3d**: To require demonstration of sufficient electricity, water and wastewater capacity, having regard to cumulative demand from existing, permitted and reasonably foreseeable development, and to ensure that necessary infrastructure is available before the relevant phase becomes operational via engagement with relevant authorities.
- **LEU OBJ 3e**: To require cooling systems that minimize freshwater consumption and water losses through efficient design, recirculation and appropriate use of harvested rainwater or reclaimed water. System selection shall address combined water and energy performance, peak demand, drought resilience and projected climate change.
- **LEU OBJ 3f**: To require avoidance of route potable-water use for cooling unless demonstrated necessary following assessment of practicable alternatives. Water supply, abstraction and discharge shall protect community water supplies, prevent deterioration of waterbody status and safeguard ecological flows and water-dependent habitats and species, including during drought and cumulatively with other development.
- **LEU OBJ 3g**: To require recovery and beneficial use of waste heat where technically, environmentally and economically feasible. Where immediate use is not feasible, proposals shall demonstrate the reasons and safeguard practicable opportunities for future heat recovery and connection to heat networks.
- **LEU OBJ 3h**: To require measures to minimise whole-life greenhouse-gas emissions and resource consumption, including sustainable construction, equipment repair and reuse, responsible waste management, and appropriate decommissioning and site reuse or restoration.
- **LEU OBJ 3i**: To require demonstration that noise, vibration, lighting, air emissions, fuel storage and discharges will not give rise to unacceptable environmental or amenity effects, individually or cumulatively, including during generator testing and emergency operation.
- **LEU OBJ 3j**: To require measurable commitments and arrangements for monitoring electricity consumption, renewable electricity matching, greenhouse-gas emissions,



water consumption and losses, and useful heat recovery, with implementation and proportionate reporting.

This additional mitigation policy has been adopted within the Draft Variation No.6.

7.4 Residual Significant Effects

Following the implementation of mitigation outlined above, residual significant effects have been identified in relation to:

- CC_1 (Climate Change): Uncertain effects due to the potential for use of fossil fuels by Large Energy Users.

7.5 Monitoring

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires the monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementing a plan, thereby enabling any unforeseen adverse effects to be identified and appropriate remedial action to be undertaken. Monitoring is also used to manage uncertainty, improve knowledge, enhance transparency and accountability, and to manage environmental information.

As a Variation to the County Development Plan, once adopted, monitoring will be undertaken as part of the on-going monitoring and review of the Meath County Development Plan. It is recommended that additional monitoring is undertaken to monitor the utilisation and quantities of fossil fuels used by Large Energy Users at within the Green Energy Park.

Meath County Council is responsible for monitoring and the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action.



8.0 Next Steps

This SEA Report is being published for consultation for a four week period from 24th November to 22nd December. Following consultation on both this SEA Report and Draft Variation No. 6, comments received on both will be considered. Any necessary changes will be made to the SEA and to the Draft Variation No. 6 in response to consultee comments will be reflected within the next iteration of the Variation No.6 and SEA.

The Variation No. 6 is expected to be published in January 2026. The indicative timetable is set out in **Table 8-1** below.

Table 8-1: Indicative Draft Variation No.6 Timetable

Local Plan Activity	Timeframe
Consultation on the Variation No. 6	November – December 2026
Adoption of Variation No. 6	January 2027
SEA Statement	Spring 2027

Appendix A Baseline and Review of Plans, Policies and Programmes

Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath County Council

SLR Project No.: 425.069056.00001

20 November 2026

Revision Record

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Authorised By
1	18 November 2026	JR/CT	AT/JM	AT/AOB
2	20 November 2026	LJ	KH	KH
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			

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1.0 Baseline

1.1 Introduction

Baseline environmental information provides the foundation for assessing the existing environmental conditions within the Plan area, identifying key environmental sensitivities, evaluating potential effects of the Plan, and monitoring outcomes following implementation. This process helps ensure that the Plan does not contribute to or exacerbate existing environmental issues. Baseline data has been compiled for the environmental receptors identified within the SEA Directive, namely biodiversity (including flora and fauna), population and human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including archaeological and architectural heritage), landscape, and the interactions between these factors.

The preparation of this Environmental Report has been informed by baseline environmental evidence, issues raised during public consultation, the Strategic Issues Paper prepared by Meath County Council, and submissions received during both the Plan preparation and SEA scoping stages. These inputs helped shape the scope of the assessment and identify the key environmental considerations relevant to the Plan.

A key stage of the SEA process is the assessment of environmental sensitivity and the identification of existing environmental problems relevant to the Plan area. In accordance with the SEA Directive, the baseline review focuses on those environmental characteristics most likely to be significantly affected by the Plan, as well as the likely evolution of the environment in the absence of the Plan. This section therefore provides a strategic overview of the environmental baseline and highlights the principal environmental issues that could be affected by the implementation of the Plan if mitigation measures were not applied.

Meath covers approximately 230,000 hectares, making it the second-largest county in Leinster. Bordering Dublin to the south, the county plays an important role in supporting the continued growth of the Greater Dublin Area. The baseline environment is described under the following themes:

- Biodiversity (including Flora & Fauna);
- Population and Human Health;
- Land, Soils and Geology;
- Water Quality;
- Air, Noise and Climate;
- Material Assets;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape and Visual; and,
- Interactions and Cumulative Impacts.

1.1.1 Ireland's State of Environment Report

The State of Environment Report[1] published in 2024 is the eighth and most recent edition of current national assessment of Ireland's environment. It concludes that while progress is being made across several environmental themes, the pace and scale of change remain insufficient to achieve long-term national environmental objectives. The report identifies significant challenges in relation to climate change, biodiversity loss, air quality, water quality and the transition to a circular economy. It highlights the need for accelerated and coordinated action to address these interconnected issues while also tackling wider environmental priorities.

Key areas requiring further attention include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reversing biodiversity decline, addressing nutrient pollution and physical pressures on water bodies, improving drinking water infrastructure and resilience, increasing waste segregation and recycling rates, reducing overall resource consumption, and improving air quality through reductions in particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide emissions. The report also identifies land use practices as a significant contributing factor to Ireland's climate, biodiversity and water quality challenges.

To support environmental improvement and sustainable development, the EPA identifies five overarching priorities:

- Establishing a national policy position on the environment, recognising the complex interactions, synergies and trade-offs between environmental objectives and other policy areas;
- Accelerating policy implementation, ensuring that existing environmental plans, programmes and legislative commitments are effectively delivered;
- Transforming key sectors, including energy, transport, food production and industry, to support the transition to a sustainable and low-carbon economy;
- Increasing investment in strategic infrastructure, particularly in water, energy, transport and waste management systems, to support environmental protection and future resilience; and,
- Protecting environmental quality to safeguard human health, including reducing exposure to environmental pollutants and other avoidable environmental risks.

The findings of the report provide important context for the preparation of the Plan and reinforce the need for planning policies that support climate action, environmental protection, sustainable resource use, and the enhancement of ecosystem resilience.

1.1.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals

As the target year of 2030 approaches, the Plan will play an important role in supporting Ireland's commitments to sustainable development through the promotion of balanced economic growth, environmental protection, climate resilience and social wellbeing. The policies and objectives contained within the Plan align with a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and will contribute to their achievement at the local level. In particular, implementation of the Plan supports:

[1] Environmental Protection Agency (2024). State of Environment Report. [online]. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report-/ [Accessed November 2026]

- SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being, through the promotion of healthy communities, access to green infrastructure, sustainable transport options and environmental quality;
- SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation, through the protection and enhancement of water resources and support for appropriate water services infrastructure;
- SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy, through facilitating renewable energy generation, energy efficiency measures and the transition to a low-carbon economy;
- SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, by supporting sustainable economic development, investment, employment opportunities and resilient communities;
- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, through the delivery of compact growth, sustainable settlement patterns, high-quality placemaking and climate-resilient development;
- SDG 13 - Climate Action, by supporting greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate adaptation, sustainable transport and renewable energy initiatives; and,
- SDG 15 - Life on Land, through the protection, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity, ecological networks and natural capital.

1.1.3 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a New Development Plan

In the absence of a successor development plan, there would be uncertainty regarding the policy framework against which new development proposals within County Meath would be assessed. The current development plan provides an integrated framework for managing growth, protecting environmental resources and promoting sustainable development across the county. Without an updated plan in place, the effectiveness of this strategic framework could diminish, resulting in less coordinated decision-making and reduced certainty for developers, communities and decision-makers.

While national legislation, regional policy, environmental regulations and European Directives would continue to apply, the absence of an up-to-date local planning framework could increase the risk of uncoordinated development and the incremental erosion of environmental quality. This could lead to a greater potential for cumulative effects, whereby numerous small-scale developments collectively give rise to significant environmental impacts that may not be apparent when individual projects are considered in isolation.

Potential adverse environmental effects arising under a scenario where no replacement plan is adopted could include:

- Loss, damage or fragmentation of habitats, ecological networks and green infrastructure assets, including impacts on designated sites, protected species and biodiversity corridors.
- Disturbance and displacement of protected species arising from development-related activities, including noise, lighting and increased human activity.
- Reduction in ecosystem services and natural capital, affecting the ability of environmental systems to regulate air quality, water quality, carbon storage and climate resilience.
- Adverse effects on human health and wellbeing through pressures on environmental quality, recreational resources and access to green space.
- Degradation of soil resources, including the loss of productive agricultural land, soil sealing and impacts on geological and hydrogeological functions.

- Deterioration in the quality, hydromorphology or ecological status of surface waters, groundwater bodies and associated aquatic ecosystems.
- Increased flood risk where development is not appropriately directed away from vulnerable areas or where sustainable drainage measures are not adequately implemented.
- Increased pressures on drinking water, wastewater and other utility infrastructure, potentially affecting the ability to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner.
- Adverse interactions between environmental receptors, including water, soil, biodiversity and human health.
- Reduced progress towards national and European climate objectives, including greenhouse gas reduction targets, climate adaptation measures and renewable energy ambitions.
- Impacts on archaeological heritage, architectural heritage and other cultural assets arising from inappropriate siting or design of development.
- Adverse effects on landscape character, visual amenity and designated landscapes.
- Increased resource consumption, waste generation and associated environmental impacts.

Consequently, in the absence of a new development plan, there is potential for environmental conditions within County Meath to deteriorate over time, despite the continued application of higher-tier environmental legislation and policy. The preparation and implementation of an updated development plan therefore remains an important mechanism for coordinating growth, managing cumulative effects and ensuring that environmental protection and sustainable development objectives are achieved across the county.

1.2 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is fundamental to ecosystem health, providing essential services such as clean air and water, healthy soils, food production, climate regulation and recreational opportunities. However, biodiversity continues to face significant pressures from habitat loss, pollution, climate change and land-use change. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is therefore critical to achieving sustainable development and climate resilience.

1.2.1 Biodiversity in County Meath

County Meath supports a diverse range of habitats and species, with key biodiversity resources associated with the River Boyne and River Blackwater catchments, their tributaries and the county's coastal areas. These habitats support important ecological networks and a range of protected, rare and threatened species. Consequently, the protection and enhancement of Meath's natural heritage is a key consideration of the Development Plan.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks in maintaining biodiversity and facilitating the movement and genetic exchange of species. In Meath, these networks are formed by rivers, streams, canals, woodlands, hedgerows and other green and blue infrastructure features that provide habitat connectivity across the county. Hedgerows are particularly important within the predominantly agricultural landscape, while river corridors, including the Boyne, Blackwater, Nanny, Delvin, Inny and Broadmeadow rivers, and the Royal Canal, provide important ecological linkages. Key ecological sensitivities within the county include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs);

- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), Ramsar sites and Nature Reserves;
- Ecological networks and habitat connectivity;
- Green and blue infrastructure assets;
- Rivers, lakes, wetlands, coastal habitats and associated riparian corridors;
- Woodlands, hedgerows and other habitats that support ecosystem services; and,
- Other sites and areas of high biodiversity value.

The protection and enhancement of these assets is essential to maintaining biodiversity, ecosystem resilience and compliance with national and European environmental objectives.

1.2.2 National Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030. The Plan's vision for Ireland in 2050 is as follows: Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people. The key objectives of the NBAP are as follows:

- Adopt a Whole-of Government, Whole of-Society Approach to Biodiversity;
- Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs;
- Secure Nature's Contribution to People;
- Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity; and,
- Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

1.2.3 Designated European Sites

County Meath contains a number of sites designated under the European Natura 2000 network, comprising both Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). In addition, a number of SACs and SPAs located outside the county fall within the potential Zone of Influence of the Development Plan and have therefore been considered as part of the assessment.

All European sites located within County Meath and those within the Plan's potential Zone of Influence are identified in **Table 1.1** and illustrated in **Figure 1.1**. While the lands proposed for zoning under the Plan are not located within any European site, the potential for direct, indirect and in-combination effects on designated sites has been assessed through the SEA and Appropriate Assessment processes.

Conservation Objectives have been prepared for all SACs and SPAs to protect and maintain the habitats and species for which the sites have been designated. Site-specific Conservation Objectives are available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)[2]. Detailed site-specific Conservation Objectives are available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Any potential effects on European sites have been fully considered through the Natura Impact Report (NIR) prepared in support of the Draft Variation No. 6 and accompanying SEA Environmental Report.

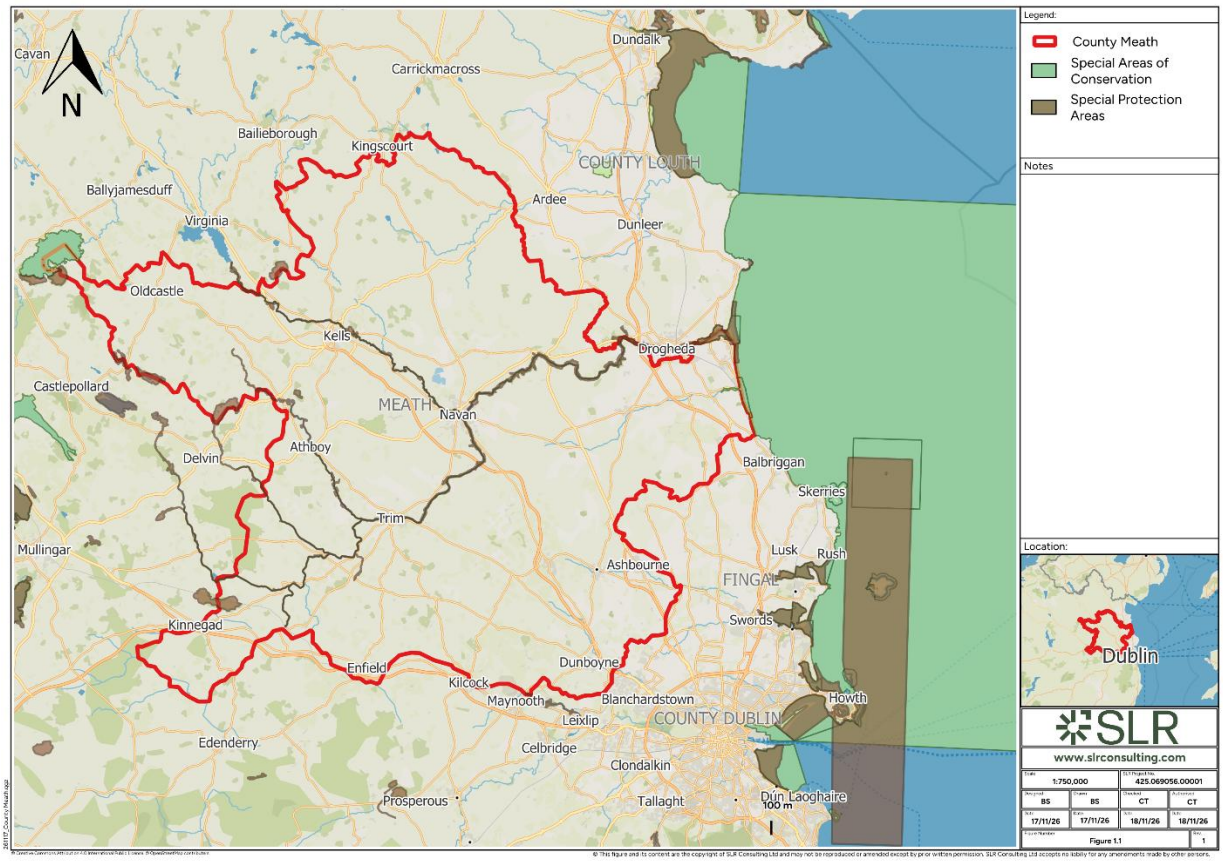
[2] National Parks & Wildlife Service. 2026. Conservation objectives [online] Available at: https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives [Accessed November 2026]

Table 1.1: European Sites located in County Meath and within the potential Zone of Influence of the County Boundary

SPA/SAC	Site Code	European Site
County Meath		
SPA	004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA
SPA	004065	Lough Sheelin SPA
SPA	004080	Boyne Estuary SPA
SPA	004158	River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA
SPA	004236	North-West Irish Sea SPA
SAC	002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC
SAC	002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC
SAC	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC
SAC	002340	Moneybeg & Clareisland Bogs SAC
SAC	002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC
SAC	002203	Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC
SAC	001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC
SAC	001398	Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC
SAC	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs & Lough Doo SAC
Within 15km of County Boundary		
SPA	004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA
SPA	004043	Lough Derravarragh SPA
SPA	004102	Garriskill Bog SPA
SPA	004044	Lough Ennell SPA
SPA	004006	North Bull Island SPA
SPA	004024	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA
SPA	004016	Baldoyle Bay SPA
SPA	004025	Malahide Estuary SPA
SPA	004015	Rogerstown Estuary SPA
SPA	004122	Skerries Islands SPA
SPA	004014	Rockabill SPA
SPA	004091	Stabannan-Braganstown SPA
SPA	004026	Dundalk Bay SPA
SAC	002201	Derragh Bog SAC
SAC	002121	Lough Lene SAC
SAC	000679	Garriskil Bog SAC
SAC	002341	Ardagullion Bog SAC
SAC	002205	Wooddown Bog SAC

SPA/SAC	Site Code	European Site
SAC	000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC
SAC	000685	Lough Ennell SAC
SAC	000925	The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC
SAC	000391	Ballynafagh Bog SAC
SAC	001387	Ballynafagh Lake SAC
SAC	001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC
SAC	000206	North Dublin Bay SAC
SAC	000210	South Dublin Bay SAC
SAC	000199	Baldoyle Bay SAC
SAC	000205	Malahide Estuary SAC
SAC	000208	Rogerstown Estuary SAC
SAC	003000	Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC
SAC	001459	Clogher Head SAC
SAC	000455	Dundalk Bay SAC

Figure 1.1: European Sites



1.2.4 Nationally Designated Sites

Nationally designated sites comprise Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs). NHAs are designated to protect habitats, species and geological features of national importance. While pNHAs have not yet been formally designated, they are recognised as important sites for biodiversity conservation and receive protection under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 from the date they are proposed for designation. Additional protection is provided through the policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan.

Designated NHAs and pNHAs are identified in **Table 1.2** and illustrated in **Figure 1.2**. These sites represent important biodiversity resources and contribute to the ecological network and natural heritage of the county.

Table 1.2: Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

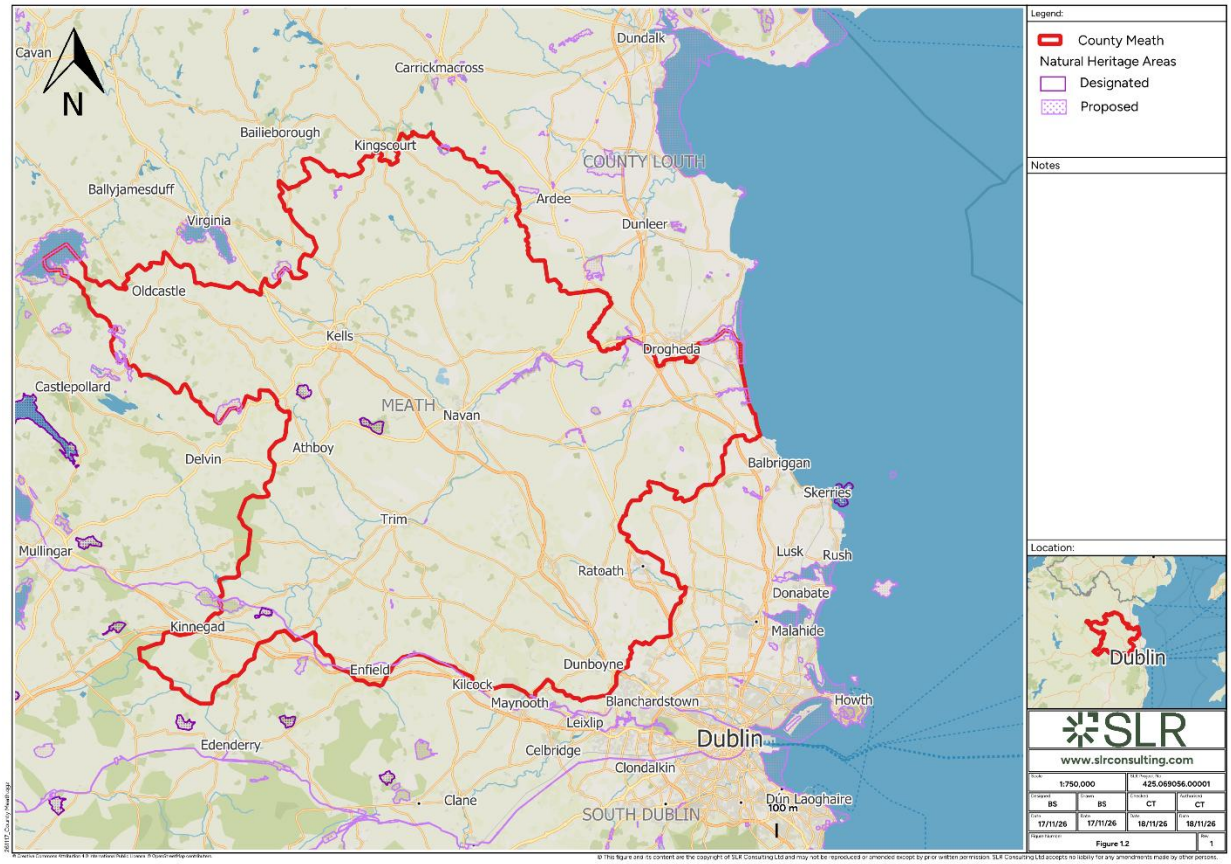
Designation	Site Code	Site Name
NHA	001324	Jamestown Bog NHA
NHA	001580	Girley Bog NHA
NHA	001582	Molerick Bog NHA
NHA	001218	Skerries Islands NHA
pNHA	000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)
pNHA	000987	Lough Sheelin
pNHA	001814	Lough Naneagh
pNHA	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo
pNHA	000556	Lough Shesk
pNHA	002103	Royal Canal
pNHA	001398	Rye Water Valley/Carton
pNHA	001584	Mount Hevey Bog
pNHA	001357	Trim
pNHA	000557	Rathmoylan Esker
pNHA	001592	Boyne Woods
pNHA	000553	Crewbane Marsh
pNHA	001591	Slane Riverbank
pNHA	001589	Rossnaree Riverbank
pNHA	001593	Thomastown Bog
pNHA	002323	Milltownpass Bog
pNHA	000207	Rockabill Island
pNHA	000677	Cloncrow Bog (New Forest)
pNHA	001616	Louth Hall and Ardee Woods
pNHA	001725	Nure Bog
pNHA	001856	Dunany Point
pNHA	000570	Black Castle Bog

Designation	Site Code	Site Name
pNHA	001801	Barmeath Woods
pNHA	001388	Carbury Bog
pNHA	001454	Ardee Cutaway Bog
pNHA	001393	Hodgestown Bog
pNHA	001464	Mellifont Abbey Woods
pNHA	001293	Blackhall Woods
pNHA	000208	Rogerstown Estuary
pNHA	000205	Malahide Estuary
pNHA	001215	Portraine Shore
pNHA	001208	Feltrim Hill
pNHA	000199	Baldoyle Bay
pNHA	001763	Sluice River Marsh
pNHA	000178	Santry Demesne
pNHA	000206	North Dublin Bay
pNHA	000128	Liffey Valley
pNHA	000390	Ballina Bog
pNHA	001391	Donadea Wood
pNHA	001387	Ballynafagh Lake
pNHA	000391	Ballynafagh Bog
pNHA	002104	Grand Canal
pNHA	000925	The Long Derries, Edenderry
pNHA	000582	Raheenmore Bog
pNHA	000685	Lough Ennell
pNHA	000690	Lough Sheever Fen / Slevin's Lough Complex
pNHA	002069	Ardagullion Bog
pNHA	000679	Garriskil Bog
pNHA	000672	Aghalasty Fen
pNHA	000686	Lough Glore
pNHA	000681	Hill of Mael and the Rock of Curry
pNHA	000992	Lough Gowna
pNHA	000008	Lough Ramor
pNHA	001608	Monalty Lough
pNHA	001671	Spring and Corcrin Lough
pNHA	001828	Reaghstown Marsh
pNHA	000560	Lough Fea Demesne
pNHA	001578	Duleek Commons

Designation	Site Code	Site Name
pNHA	001579	Balrath Woods
pNHA	001576	Cromwell's Bush Fen
pNHA	000554	Laytown Dunes / Nanny Estuary
pNHA	001957	Boyne Coast and Estuary
pNHA	001861	Dowth Wetland
pNHA	001862	Boyne River Islands
pNHA	001587	Mentrim Lough
pNHA	000552	Corstown Loughs
pNHA	001594	Ballyhoe Lough
pNHA	001558	Breakey Loughs
pNHA	001573	Ballynabarny Fen
NHA (within 15 km)	000985	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough
NHA (within 15 km)	000684	Lough Derravaragh
NHA (within 15 km)	000694	Wooddown Bog
NHA (within 15 km)	000561	Lough Naglack
NHA (within 15 km)	000456	Stabannan-Braganstown
NHA (within 15 km)	001464	Mellifont Abbey Woods
NHA (within 15 km)	001721	Lough Bane
NHA (within 15 km)	001458	Castlecoo Hill
NHA (within 15 km)	000692	Scragh Bog
NHA (within 15 km)	000978	Cordonaghy Bog
NHA (within 15 km)	000690	Lough Sheever Fen / Slevin's Lough Complex
NHA (within 15 km)	000455	Dundalk Bay
NHA (within 15 km)	000991	Dodder Valley
pNHA (within 15 km)	001203	Knock Lake
pNHA (within 15 km)	001204	Bog of the Ring
pNHA (within 15 km)	002000	Loughshinny Coast
pNHA (within 15 km)	002077	Nafarty Fen
pNHA (within 15 km)	001806	Kildemock Marsh
pNHA (within 15 km)	001804	King William's Glen
pNHA (within 15 km)	001459	Clogher Head
pNHA (within 15 km)	001599	Creevy Lough
pNHA (within 15 km)	001461	Darver Castle Woods
pNHA (within 15 km)	001462	Drumacg, Toprass and Cortial Lough
pNHA (within 15 km)	001803	Stephenstown Pond
pNHA (within 15 km)	000211	Slade of Saggart and Crooksling Glen

Designation	Site Code	Site Name
pNHA (within 15 km)	001212	Lugmore Glen

Figure 1.2: Natural Heritage Areas



1.2.5 Water Framework Directive (WFD) Register of Protected Area

Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) a number of waterbodies (or parts of) must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). This register is split into five categories as outlined by the EPA:

- Areas designated for the abstraction of water intended for human consumption under Article 7;
- Areas designated for the protection of economically significant aquatic species (i.e. shellfish);
- Bodies of water designated as recreational waters, including areas designated as bathing waters under Directive 76/160/EEC;
- Nutrient-sensitive areas, including areas designated as vulnerable zones under Directive 91/676/EEC and areas designated as sensitive areas under Directive 91/271/EEC; and ,
- Areas designated for the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection, including relevant European sites (Natura 2000) designated under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 79/409/EEC.

A number of these protected areas are present within the study area or in immediate vicinity and these are:

- The entire ground waterbody beneath the county is included on the Drinking Water - Ground Waterbody;
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Lake, Coastal & Transitional waterbodies) – Boyne Estuary;
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Rivers) - River Boyne;
- WFD RPA Recreational Waters – Bettystown bathing water;
- WFD RPA Shellfish Areas - Balbriggan \ Skerries Shellfish Area; and,
- Salmonid Rivers – River Boyne.

1.2.6 Designated Shellfish Waters

The Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC) sought to protect and improve the quality of waters supporting shellfish populations, thereby contributing to the protection of shellfish habitats and the production of high-quality shellfish for human consumption. In Ireland, designated shellfish waters are subject to Pollution Reduction Programmes (PRPs) under the Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 268 of 2006), which aim to address pressures such as wastewater discharges, on-site wastewater treatment systems and port-related activities.

There is one designated Shellfish Water in proximity to County Meath, Balbriggan/Skerries (IE_EA_020_0000), located off the Meath coast approximately 3.7 km east of the County boundary. This designation supports the protection of commercially and ecologically important bivalve and gastropod molluscs, including oysters (*Ostrea spp*.), mussels (*Mytilus spp*.), cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*), scallops (*Pecten spp.)* and clams (various species). They do not cover shellfish crustaceans such as crabs, crayfish and lobsters.

1.2.7 Salmonid Waters

The Salmonid Regulations 1988 (S.I. No. 293 of 1988) identify and protect waters capable of supporting salmonid fish species, including Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta),* char (*Salvelinus spp.*) and whitefish (*Coregonus spp*.). The Regulations establish water quality standards and monitoring requirements to protect and enhance the ecological condition of designated salmonid waters.

The River Boyne in County Meath is a designated Salmonid Water under the EU Freshwater Fish Directive.

1.2.8 Other Designation

1.2.8.1 Statutory Nature Reserves

Statutory Nature Reserves are areas protected under national legislation through Ministerial Order under the Wildlife Acts. These sites are designated to conserve habitats, species and geological features of particular ecological importance. There are no Statutory Nature Reserves within County Meath. The nearest reserve is Rogerstown Estuary Nature Reserve, located approximately 14km east of the County boundary in County Dublin.

In January 2019 the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published notice of making Statutory Instrument (S.I. No. 602 of 2018) under section 16 of the Wildlife Act established the first private Nature Reserve in County Meath at Newcastle Lough. The site supports a range of habitats, including reedbeds, wet grassland and wet woodland, and is

noted for its high water quality and diverse aquatic invertebrate communities. The lake supports populations of coarse fish, pike (*Esox lucius*) and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), while notable fauna recorded at the reserve include otter (*Lutra lutra*), badger (*Meles meles*), pine marten (Martes martes), six bat species, kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) and white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*). As such, the reserve represents an important biodiversity resource within County Meath.

1.2.8.2 Ramsar Sites

Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. These sites support a wide range of ecosystem services, including water quality improvement, flood attenuation, shoreline stabilisation, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of natural resources. Ireland currently supports 45 Ramsar Sites, which are managed to maintain their ecological character and the environmental, social and economic benefits they provide.

There are no Ramsar Sites located within County Meath. The nearest Ramsar Site is Lough Derravaragh, situated in County Westmeath less than 10 km west of the County Meath boundary.

1.2.8.3 Wildfowl Sanctuaries

Wildfowl Sanctuaries are areas designated under national legislation where the hunting of game birds is prohibited, providing important refuges in which wildfowl can rest, feed and roost free from disturbance. These protected areas contribute to the conservation of bird populations and support the maintenance of biodiversity, particularly within wetland and coastal habitats. There are 68 Wildfowl Sanctuaries across Ireland[3]. Within County Meath, part of the Boyne Estuary Wildfowl Sanctuary (WFS-41) is designated as a protected sanctuary, recognising the importance of the estuary for wintering and migratory bird species.

1.2.8.4 *Margaritifera* Sensitive Areas

The freshwater pearl mussel, comprising the species *Margaritifera margaritifera* and *Margaritifera durrovensis*, is a globally threatened and highly sensitive freshwater mollusc protected under Annex II and Annex V of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The species is particularly vulnerable to declines in water quality, including increased sedimentation and nutrient enrichment, as well as hydrological and morphological alterations within river catchments. To safeguard these populations, designated Margaritifera Sensitive Areas are afforded additional protection and management measures.

There are no Margaritifera Sensitive Areas within County Meath or in its immediate vicinity.

1.2.8.5 Wetlands and Coastal Zones

Wetlands range from ponds to rivers, reed beds to bogs and fens and can also include areas influenced by the marine – from coastal and estuarine salt marshes, dune slacks and saline wet meadows and lagoons. They support a variety of habitats and species, function in the protection of water quality and / or flood control, are important carbon stores contributing to climate resilience and provide open space and recreational opportunities.

Coastal zones are important for wildlife and provide a wonderful amenity resource for Meath. Meath's short coastline is home to internationally important populations of wintering birds at the Boyne estuary, as well as protected habitats of high nature conservation importance. The

[3] National Parks & Wildlife Service (2025). *Wildfowl Sanctuaries*. [online] Available at: https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/wildfowl-sanctuaries [Accessed November 2026]

coastal zone of Meath contains important resources that provide economic, recreational, aesthetic and conservation benefits.

The coastline of Meath is classified as a soft coast and stretches between the Boyne Estuary in the north and the River Delvin in the south. The coastline is home to a variety of natural habitats and there are several species of flora and fauna, reflected in the SAC, pNHA and SPA designations that cover much of the area.

The County Meath Wetlands Survey Mapping Project 2025[4] provides baseline ecological data. The purpose of the survey was to determine and map the type, extent and condition of wetlands and coastal habitats in Meath. The study focused on sites which lie outside designated areas. It identified over 1,700 wetland potential sites under a determined methodology suggesting that all of those sites identified are treated as potentially supporting the wetlands

1.2.9 Invasive Species

Invasive species constitute a threat to biodiversity and eco-systems and can have economic costs. In Ireland, there are currently 377 recorded non-native species and 342 non-native 'potential Invaders', 66% are considered to have a low impact risk, 21% to have a medium impact risk and 13% have a high impact risk. The majority of invasive species in Ireland are plants, however, there is potential for rising trends of invasive vertebrate and invertebrate species[5]. In Meath, approximately 350 species of alien vascular plant, accounting for around one third of the county's total vascular plant species, though only a handful of these cause problems. The most destructive of these species are Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), usually occasionally found along watercourses, completely taking over areas of the riverbank. Landowners are responsible for preventing the spread of Japanese Knotweed on their own land.

Invasive species audits have been carried out along the Boyne, and it is an objective of the Meath Biodiversity Action Plan to continue to monitor alien invasive species in the County and ensure adequate training is carried out to contain, manage and effectively dispose of such species.

1.2.10 Existing Biodiversity Issues

Ireland's biodiversity continues to face significant pressures, with ongoing declines in the extent and condition of habitats and in the populations of many protected and common species. The implementation of measures arising from the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and Water Framework Directive (WFD) is expected to contribute to improvements in the conservation status of protected habitats and species and the ecological quality of aquatic environments over the longer term. However, biodiversity remains vulnerable to a range of environmental pressures associated with land-use change, development and resource use.

Activities that have the potential to adversely affect biodiversity include agricultural intensification, forestry and afforestation, urban expansion, mineral extraction, renewable energy developments, tourism and recreation, commercial fishing, flood defence works, transport infrastructure, water abstraction, and wastewater collection and treatment. Where such activities occur within, adjacent to, or hydrologically connected to ecologically sensitive

[4] Wetland Surveys Ireland (2026). *Wetland Surveys*. [online] Wetland Surveys. Available at: https://www.wetlandsurveys.ie/ [Accessed November 2026].

[5] O'Flynn, C., Kelly,J. and Lysaght,L.(2014).Ireland's invasive and non-native species–trends in introductions. National Biodiversity Data Centre Series No. 2.

areas, they can result in habitat loss and fragmentation, deterioration in water quality, disturbance to species and degradation of ecological networks.

Within County Meath, key biodiversity sensitivities are associated with its rivers, wetlands, estuarine and coastal environments, including the River Boyne catchment and the coastal habitats along the Irish Sea. The protection and enhancement of water quality, maintenance of habitat connectivity, conservation of designated sites and species, and prevention of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species are important environmental considerations.

Invasive alien species remain a significant ecological pressure within the County. Species recorded in County Meath include Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*). These species can adversely affect biodiversity through the displacement of native flora and fauna, alteration of habitat structure and ecosystem processes, increased erosion of riverbanks, damage to infrastructure, restrictions on access to watercourses and significant management and control costs.

The principal biodiversity pressures and threats relevant to County Meath include:

- Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation arising from development, land-use change and infrastructure projects;
- Impacts on ecological networks and wildlife corridors that support the movement and dispersal of species;
- Deterioration in surface water and groundwater quality resulting from wastewater discharges, agricultural runoff, diffuse pollution and hydrological alterations;
- Disturbance of sensitive habitats and species from recreational activities, increased visitor pressure and human activity;
- The introduction and spread of invasive alien species and associated impacts on native habitats and species;
- Emerging threats from pests, pathogens and diseases affecting flora and fauna;
- Land-use change and soil sealing, resulting in biodiversity loss, reduced habitat availability and diminished carbon sequestration capacity;
- Mixed-source pollution, including emissions from transport, domestic heating, wastewater infrastructure, forestry operations and other diffuse sources that can contribute to eutrophication, acidification and ecosystem degradation; and
- The cumulative effects of multiple developments and activities acting in combination across catchments, ecosystems and ecological networks.

Without appropriate mitigation and environmental management, these pressures have the potential to undermine the integrity of designated sites, reduce ecosystem resilience and adversely affect biodiversity at local, regional and national scales.

1.3 Population & Human Health

The administrative area of Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares (ha) and is the second largest county in Leinster. It shares its boundary with counties, Dublin, Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly, and Kildare.

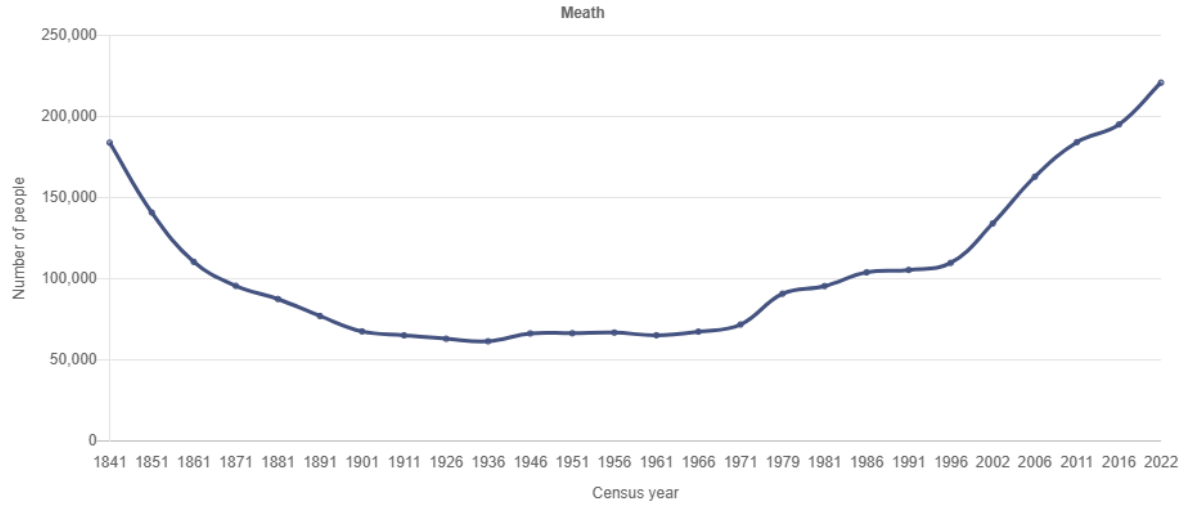
1.3.1 Population

The administrative area of Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares (ha) and is the second largest county in Leinster. It shares its boundary with counties, Dublin, Louth,

Monaghan, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and Kildare. The 2022 Census results showed that the population for County Meath was 220,826 persons[6], an increase of 13.2% from the 2016 census (195, 044 persons)[7]. The 2016 Census showed that the population of Meath was an increase of 5.9% from the 2011 census (184, 135 persons)[8].

The National Planning Framework (NPF) outlines that by 2040 there will be roughly an extra one million people living in Ireland. There was a rapid growth in population in Meath between 2006-11 when the population increased by 13% with 5.9% increase during the following five year period (2011-2016). Over the 10-year period between 2006-16 the population increase was 20%. Between 2016-2027 it is projected that the population of Meath will increase by 17.3% (Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030). **Figure 1.3**, below, shows the population of Meath County between 1841 to 2022.

Figure 1.3: Population at each census of Meath County, 1841 to 2022[9]



1.3.1.1 Age Profile

The age structure of a population is influenced by patterns of natural increase and migration. The age dependency ratio is the proportion of population in the young (0-14 years) and old (65 years and above) cohorts to the working population cohort (15-64 years).

The age structure of the population of County Meath reflects the future housing requirements, school requirements and community services. The age structure of the population indicates that the County in 2022 has a relatively young and working population (42 years and 11 years in 2022) and corresponds to that of the State (41 years).

Child dependency in County Meath is high with 22.7% of the population under the age of 14 in comparison to an average of 19.65% for the State. Old age dependency in the County has an average of 15% for the State, while for County Meath is 12.25%. The working population

[6] Central Statistics Office (2022). *Census of population 2022*. [online] Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/censusofpopulation2022/ [Accessed November 2026].

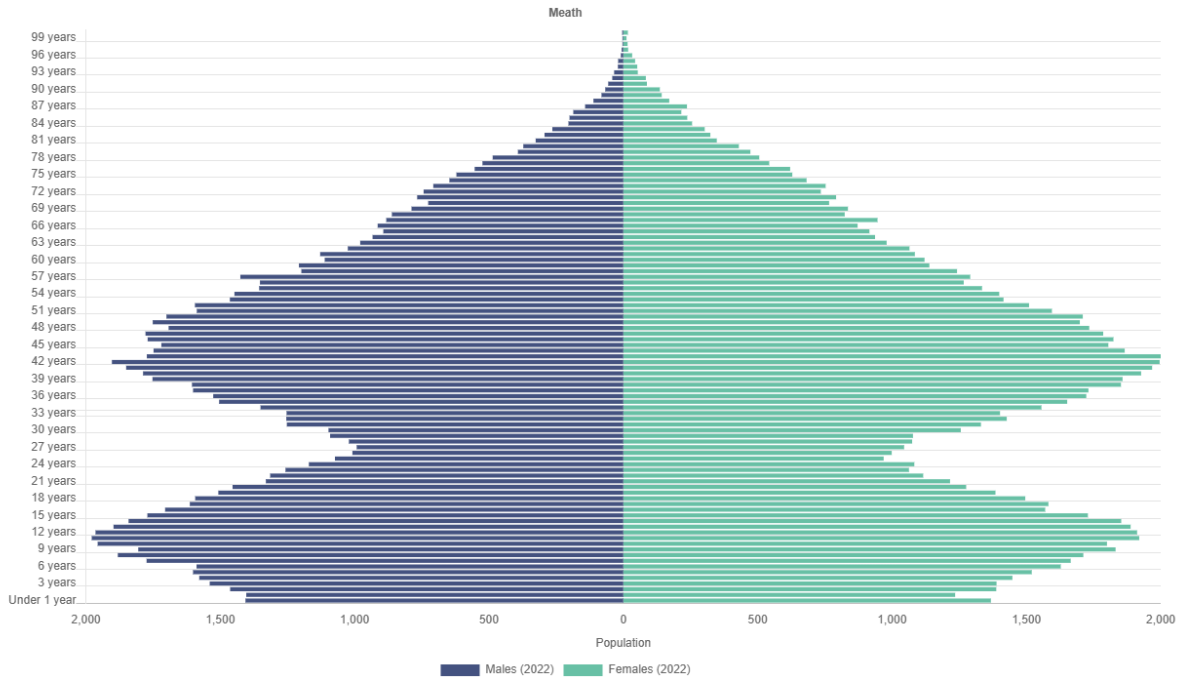
[7] Central Statistics Office (2016). *Census of population 2016*. [online] Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2016reports/ [Accessed November 2026].

[8] Central Statistics Office (2011). *Census of population 2011*. [online] Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/ [Accessed November 2026].

[9] Central Statistics Office (2023). *Population distribution* [online] www.cso.ie. Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/ [Accessed November 2026]

(15-64 years) for County Meath is 64.9% and corresponds to that for the State (65.02%). The increased numbers in the young population (0-14 years) reflects a more immediate requirements for additional childcare and schools for the younger population. The slight increase in the older populations (65 years and above) will also have long-term implications relating to healthcare, social services and transport. **Figure 1.4**, below, shows the population by age distribution for County Meath.

Figure 1.4: Population by age distribution for County Meath 2022[10]



1.3.1.2 Housing

County Meath has experienced significant housing growth in recent years, reflecting its strong population growth and strategic location within the Eastern and Midland Region. The 2022 Census[11] recorded 78,759 dwellings in Meath County, an increase of approximately 11.5% since 2016, making Meath one of the fastest-growing counties in Ireland.

The County continues to face pressure for both urban and rural housing development. In particular, demand for one-off rural housing has contributed to dispersed settlement patterns in some areas, placing pressure on landscape character, infrastructure provision, biodiversity and transport networks. As a result, the sustainable management of rural housing remains an important planning consideration.

National, regional and local planning policy seeks to accommodate future housing growth through compact development, directing new development towards existing towns, villages and serviced settlements in accordance with the County Settlement Hierarchy. This approach supports sustainable communities, efficient infrastructure provision, climate action objectives

[10] Central Statistics Office (2023). *Population distribution* [online] www.cso.ie. Available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/ [Accessed November 2026]

[11] Central Statistics Office (2023). *Housing in Ireland* [online] www.cso.ie. Available at https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp2/censusofpopulation2022profile2-housinginireland/ [Accessed November 2026]

and the protection of environmental resources while ensuring that future housing needs can be met across a range of household types and affordability levels.

1.3.1.3 Tourism

Tourism is an important contributor to the economy of County Meath, supporting employment, local businesses and rural communities. The County benefits from a diverse tourism offering centred on its internationally significant archaeological and cultural heritage, attractive rural landscapes, historic towns and villages, and a growing range of recreation and visitor attractions.

The Boyne Valley, recognised as the birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East, is one of Ireland's premier tourism destinations, with County Meath serving as a key gateway to the region. The County contains a number of nationally and internationally significant heritage assets, including the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site, Newgrange, Knowth, the Hill of Tara, Trim Castle and the Hill of Slane, all of which attract substantial visitor numbers.

County Meath also hosts a range of festivals and cultural events that contribute to its tourism appeal, including the Hinterland Festival, Kells Type Trail, Guth Gafa International Documentary Film Festival, Nobber Harp Festival and Spirits of Meath. In addition, attractions such as Emerald Park and Slane Distillery have broadened the County's tourism offering, helping to diversify the visitor experience beyond its traditional heritage and cultural attractions.

Overall, the County's tourism assets represent an important economic, cultural and recreational resource, the sustainable management and enhancement of which are key considerations for future development.

1.3.2 Human Health

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental factors such as air, water or soil through which contaminants could accumulate and have potential to cause harm through contact with human beings. Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise due to exposure to these vectors, for example arising from incompatible adjacent land uses. The impact of development on human health is also influenced by the extent to which new development is accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and the maintenance of the quality of water, air and soil.

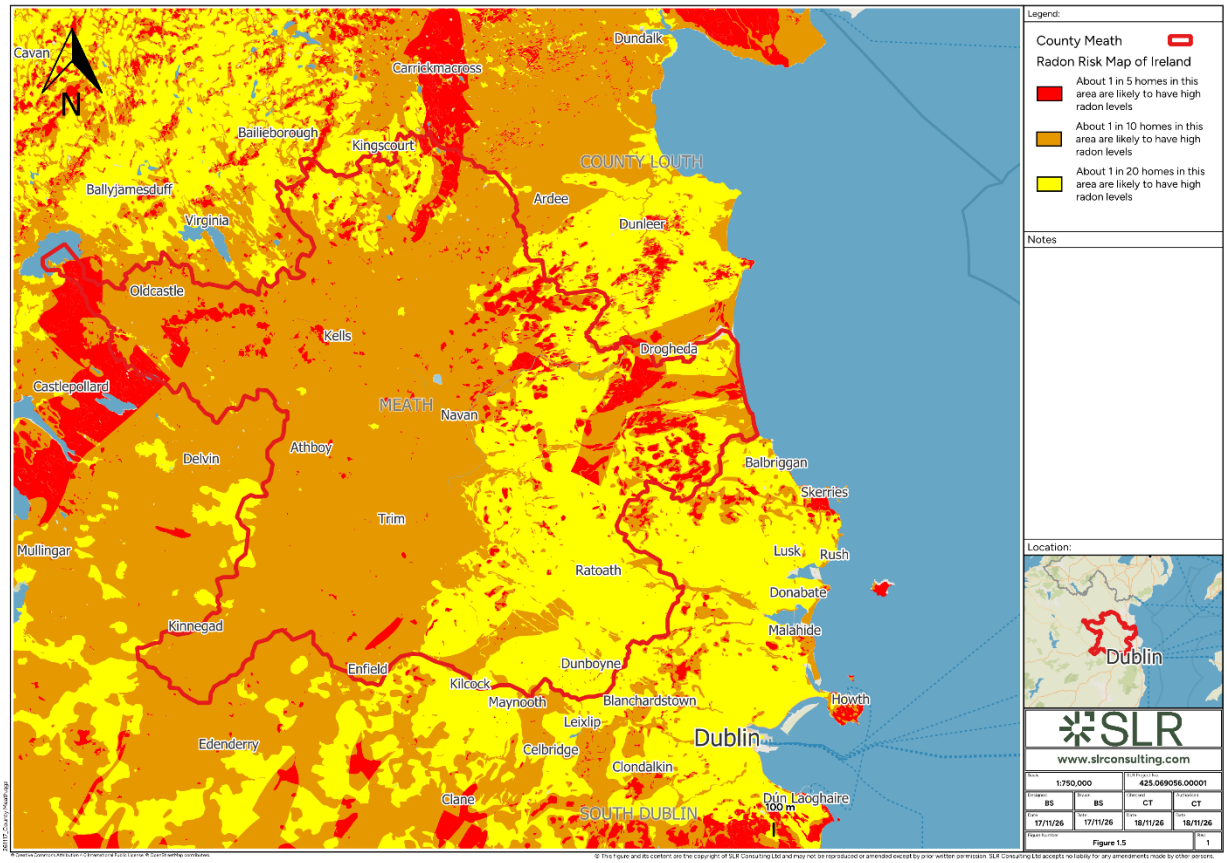
1.3.2.1 Infrastructure / Amenity and Human Health

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and well-being. Nationally there has been, in recent years, an increased focus on fitness, sports and recreation generally. Sport is an important contributor to the life of the citizens of Meath, with facilities ranging from GAA facilities, horse racing courses, equestrian centres, golf courses, walking routes, beaches, public swimming pools as well as private facilities in hotels, all of which play an important role in the tourism economy. The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 has objectives for delivery of several greenways and upgrade of towpaths in the County. The presence of beaches, watercourses, equestrian and related activities, along with golfing facilities and swimming pools etc., has a growing and an important role to play in the tourism economy. Public open space has an important function and serves a variety of purposes. Accessible, useable, dedicated open spaces and recreational facilities to meet both passive and active recreational needs are vital for residential and recreational amenity. The Council will encourage, where possible, the development of open spaces as an accessible recreation amenity.

1.3.2.2 Radon & Human Health

Radon is a radioactive gas, which is naturally produced in the ground from the uranium present in small quantities in all rocks and soils. Tiny radioactive particles are produced by the gas which when inhaled can cause lung cancer. The risk of contracting lung cancer as a result of Radon depends on how much Radon a person has been exposed to over a period of time. Radon levels in the County have been collated from the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland and are shown in **Figure 1.5**, below. Areas in red are most at risk from radon and are called High Radon Areas, the areas of the map in orange and yellow are areas of medium and low risk respectively.

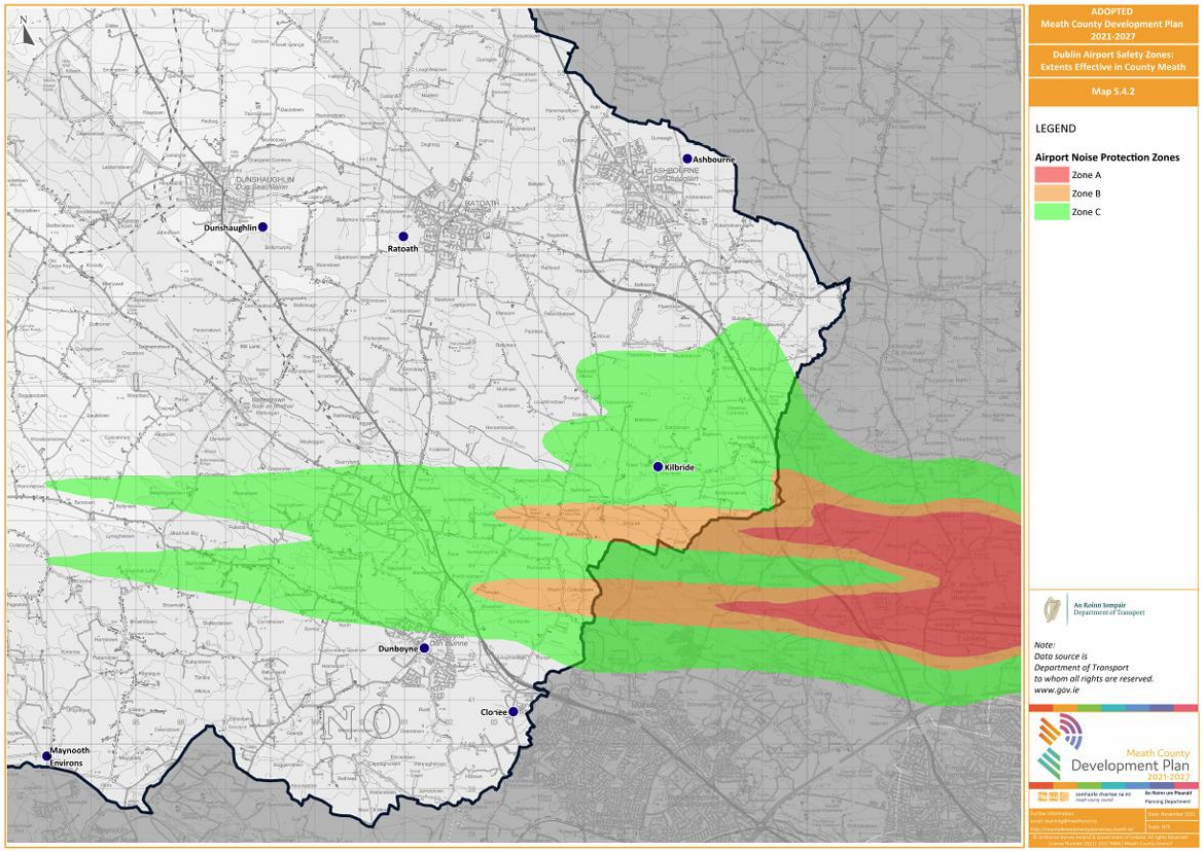
Figure 1.5: Radon Risk map for County Meath



1.3.2.3 Dublin Airport

Dublin International Airport is located within Fingal and while being of national and strategic significance, it is also a significant source of noise for County Fingal. Parts of the County Meath are located within the noise zones B & C and the outer public safety zone for Dublin Airport and planning restrictions are in place for these zones.

Figure 1.6: Airport Noise Protection Zones extending into County Meath (Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030)[12]



1.3.3 Existing Population & Human Health Issues

County Meath continues to experience strong population growth, resulting in increased demand for housing, infrastructure, community facilities and public services. Accommodating this growth in sustainable, well-serviced locations is important to reduce emissions, support climate resilience and promote healthy communities.

Human health and wellbeing are influenced by access to housing, recreation, green infrastructure and essential services. Key issues affecting the County include:

- Population growth and housing demand: Continued population growth is increasing demand for housing, infrastructure, community facilities and public services;
- Sustainable settlement patterns: Directing development towards existing towns and villages is necessary to support compact growth, reduce emissions and maximise the use of existing infrastructure;
- Health and wellbeing: Ongoing provision of recreational, leisure, green infrastructure and active travel facilities is required to support physical and mental wellbeing;
- Flood risk: While flooding has been relatively limited compared to other counties, flood events have affected homes, businesses and infrastructure within the County;

[12] Meath County Council (2024) *Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied)* online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

- Climate change: Increasing risks associated with extreme weather events, including flooding, heatwaves and cold spells, may have implications for public health and community resilience;
- Radon exposure: Certain parts of County Meath are subject to elevated radon risk, requiring consideration in future development;
- Environmental noise: Noise from transport infrastructure and aircraft flight paths may affect residential amenity, sleep quality and overall wellbeing; and,
- Infrastructure capacity: Ensuring adequate drinking water, wastewater and other essential services to accommodate future growth remains a key consideration.

Overall, the principal population and human health issues for County Meath relate to managing population growth, supporting healthy and sustainable communities, enhancing climate resilience and ensuring that infrastructure and services keep pace with future development.

1.4 Land, Soils & Geology

Soil is composed of mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms. Land degradation is a global problem, often caused by a combination of factors such as poor land management and unsustainable development. Land degradation may exacerbate the impacts of natural disasters.

1.4.1 Land

1.4.1.1 Agriculture

County Meath's rich pasturelands support a wide variety of farming types. Agriculture has been the most important contributor to the rural economy of County Meath and it plays an important role in environmental management and landscape protection. Land use patterns from agriculture to uses for residential developments, business parks and light industry can result in the loss of hedgerow boundaries and alteration or culverting of stream channels. The loss of agricultural and soil resources close to the metropolitan area of Dublin also increases dependency on imported food produce with corresponding increased 'food miles' and higher carbon emissions.

1.4.1.2 Soils

Soil is an important environmental resource that supports a wide range of ecosystem services, including food production, water filtration and storage, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, biodiversity conservation and landscape character. As a non-renewable resource on human timescales, soil plays a critical role in supporting agricultural productivity, regulating environmental processes and providing a foundation for human activities and infrastructure.

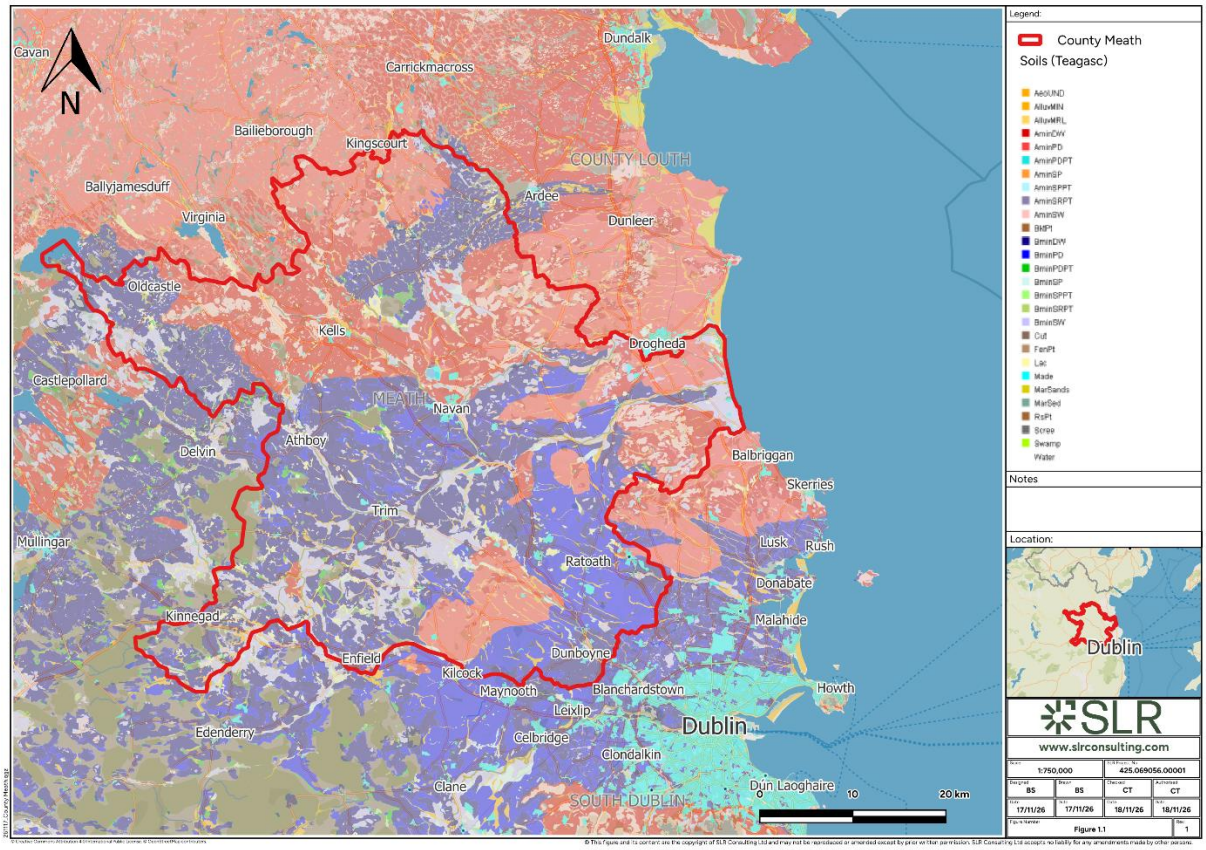
Information on soil types and distribution is available through the Irish Soil Information System (SIS), developed by Teagasc and the EPA, which provides a national soil mapping resource. The variety of soils present within the County supports different habitats, land uses and ecosystem functions, while also influencing hydrology, water quality and carbon storage.

County Meath contains a diverse range of soil types that support its agricultural, ecological and economic functions. The County's soils are primarily derived from calcareous and non-calcareous glacial deposits, alluvium and areas of peat. In general, the County is characterised by a mix of well-drained and poorly drained mineral soils, many of which are of high agricultural value and contribute to Meath's importance as a productive farming region.

The soils in Meath range from mineral poorly drained (mainly basic) (BminPD), mineral poorly drained (mainly acidic) (AminPD), deep well drained mineral (mainly basic) (BminDW), deep

well drained mineral (mainly acidic) (AminDW) to shallow well drained mineral (mainly acidic) (BminSW)[13]. The soil types within the study area are shown in **Figure 1.7**. These soils can be impacted upon by development, land use changes and water quality.

Figure 1.7: Map of Soils in Ireland[14]



1.4.1.3 Major Accidents (Seveso sites)

The Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU) and the European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations establish a framework for the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances and the limitation of their consequences for human health and the environment. The legislation applies to facilities that store or use dangerous substances above specified threshold quantities and requires operators to implement measures proportionate to the level of risk. Higher-tier establishments are subject to additional emergency planning requirements, including the preparation of external emergency plans in coordination with relevant statutory authorities.

There are currently three Seveso establishments within County Meath. In addition, several Seveso sites located in neighbouring counties, including Louth, Fingal and Kildare, have consultation zones that extend into or overlap with parts of County Meath. These sites are detailed in **Table 1.3**.

[13] Geological Survey Ireland (2026). *IE GSI spatial resources*. [online] ArcGIS Available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ae9feb997c7248578a0276e965bdcf96 [Accessed November 2026].

[14] Teagasc | Agriculture and Food Development Authority. (2026). *Irish Soil Information System* [online] Available at: https://teagasc.ie/environment/soil/irish-soil-types-and-maps/irish-soil-information-system/ [Accessed November 2026].

Table 1.3: Seveso Sites in the Meath Administrative Area or Sites where Consultation Distances extend into the County[15]

Tier	Site Name	Address	Consultation Radius
Upper Tier	Boliden Tara Mines DAC	Knockumber Road, Navan, Co. Meath	1,000 m
Upper Tier	Flogas Ireland Ltd.	Marsh Road, Drogheda	1,000 m
Upper Tier	Irish Industrial Explosives Limited	Clonagh, Enfield, Co. Meath	600 m
Upper Tier	Chemco (Ireland) Limited	Macetown, North Road, Damastown Industrial Estate, Mulhuddart	1,000 m
Upper Tier	Guerbet Ireland ULC	Damastown Industrial Estate, Mulhuddart	1,000 m
Lower Tier	Xtratherm Limited	Liscarton Industrial Estate, Kells Road, Navan	1,000 m
Lower Tier	Grassland Fertilizers Limited	The Pound, Slane Road, Drogheda	1,000 m
Lower Tier	Clarochem Ireland Ltd.	Damastown, Mullhuddart	700 m
Lower Tier	Astellas Ireland Co. Ltd.	Damastown Industrial Park, Mullhuddart	1,000 m

1.4.1.4 Landslides

Meath County has a low landslide risk as much of the area is low-lying ground. According to Geological Survey Ireland landslide susceptibility mapping, the vast majority of the county has been rated as having ‘low’ landslide susceptibility, with the risk rising to ‘moderately low’ in isolated patches throughout the county. There are four recorded landslide within County Meath.

1.4.2 Geology

County Meath is a place with a subtle but distinctive landscape compared to other parts of Ireland. The bedrock foundation, with hundreds of millions of years in the formation and shaping, and the more recent history of geomorphological processes involving river channels and glaciers are what have created the underlying geological diversity, or geodiversity. Geological understanding and interpretation is best achieved on the ground at sites where rocks and landforms are displayed. County Meath has a range of such natural and man-made sites.

Information on bedrock geology, subsoils, aquifers and groundwater vulnerability is provided by the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI). County Meath is underlain by a range of geological formations, including the Clontail Formation, Fingal Group, Rathkenny Formation, Lucan Formation, Waulsortian Limestones Formation and Loughshinny Formation, reflecting the geological diversity present across the County.

[15] Meath County Council (2024) *Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied)* online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

Geodiversity represents an important environmental asset, providing scientific, educational, cultural and economic value, while also influencing land use, agriculture, groundwater resources and biodiversity. Geological exposures and landforms offer important opportunities for research, interpretation and recreation.

1.4.2.1 Geological Heritage

County Meath is underlain by several different rock formations. To the north by the Clontail Formation (Calcareous red-mica greywacke), the Fingal Group (Dark limestone, shale and micrite) and the Rathkenny Formation (Black mudstone, siltstone, greywacke) to the west and centre by the Lucan Formation (Dark limestone & shale), the south by Waulsortian Limestones Formation (massive unbedded lime-mudstone) and the east by the Loughshinny Formation (Dark micrite & calcarenite, shale)[16]

The Geological Survey Ireland has identified 31 Irish Geological Heritage (IGH) sites within County Meath (see **Table 1.4**). Although these sites do not have statutory designation in the same manner as Natura 2000 sites or Natural Heritage Areas, they are recognised within the planning process and are afforded protection through the development management system.

Table 1.4: Geological Heritage Sites in and around County Meath

IGH Theme	Site Name	Site Code	Description
IGH 3	Poulmore Scarp	MH007	Swallow hole cliff section, which may also be a disused quarry
IGH 3	Barley Hill Quarry	MH005	Working quarry
IGH 7	Mullaghmore	MH013	Gravel pits and agricultural land
IGH 9	Carrickleck (Silica Sand)	MH025	Working quarry
IGH 3	Cregg	MH006	Natural rock outcrops
IGH 8	Altmush Stream	MH018	Natural rock outcrops along the banks of a stream over a distance of approximately 1.5 km
IGH 8	Nobber	MH022	Natural rock outcrops along the banks of the River Dee over a distance of approximately 360 m
IGH 8	Kilbride Quarry	MH021	Disused quarry
IGH 7	Blackwater Valley	MH010	River valley and outwash plain
IGH 8	Rockwood Cliffs	MH024	Cliff section along the River Boyne
IGH 1	St. Keeran's Well	MH002	Natural rock outcrop and springs
IGH 7	Rathkenny	MH015	Hummocky topography with gravel pit
IGH 7	Murrens	MH014	Wooded ridge, esker and hummocky ground including gravel pit
IGH 1	Gibstown Castle	MH001	Natural rock outcrop and spring
IGH 2	Grangegeeth	MH004	Overgrown depression which may have been quarried or may represent a natural stream gully and waterfall

[16] Geological Survey Ireland (2026). *IE GSI spatial resources*. [online] ArcGIS Available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ae9feb997c7248578a0276e965bdcf96 [Accessed November 2026].

IGH Theme	Site Name	Site Code	Description
IGH 7	Boyne Valley	MH011	River valley
IGH 8	Painestown Quarry	MH023	Disused quarry now heavily vegetated
IGH 8	Duleek Quarry	MH020	Working quarry
IGH 2	Bellewstown	MH003	Working quarry and natural exposures within agricultural fields, with rock close to the surface
IGH 7	Laytown to Gormanston	MH008	Coastal plain, including sea cliffs
IGH 14	Boyne River, Trim	MH027	Section of the River Boyne
IGH 8	Bray Hill	MH019	Working quarry
IGH 7	Trim Esker	MH017	Approximately 6 km long section of predominantly wooded esker ridge
IGH 7	Galtrim Moraine	MH012	Partially wooded and extensively quarried moraine ridge
IGH 12	Dunshaughlin	MH026	Site unexposed at the surface
IGH 7	Rathmolyon Esker	MH016	Remnant face within former sand and gravel quarry
IGH 7	Benhead	MH009	High coastal cliff face
IGH 16	St. Gorman's Spring	MH028	Warm spring
IGH 1	Mell Quarry	LH023	Complex of disused quarries adjacent to and northwest of Drogheda
IGH 1	Waterunderbridge-Dry Bridge	LH032	Narrow, shallow gorge containing a sometimes-dry streambed
IGH 7	King William's Glen	LH021	Deep, almost 2 km-long northwest-southeast orientated stream channel cut into glacial till and underlying bedrock.

1.4.3 Quarries

County Meath contains significant sand, gravel, limestone and shale resources that support the construction and manufacturing sectors and contribute to local employment and economic activity. There are 63 registered extractive industry operators within the County[17].

While quarrying provides important economic benefits, it can also give rise to environmental and amenity impacts, including noise, dust, vibration, traffic generation, visual impacts, habitat loss, and effects on surface water and groundwater resources. The sustainable management of extractive activities, including site restoration and environmental protection measures, remains an important consideration in balancing resource extraction with the protection of communities and environmental assets.

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Quarries and Ancillary Activities published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in 2004 and a

[17] Environmental Protection Agency (2019). *Extractive industries register*. [online] Available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/compliance--enforcement/waste/extractive-industries-register/ [Accessed November 2026].

number of other guidelines relating to quarrying have been produced by various bodies to provide guidance to MCC on the management of extractive industries.

1.4.4 Existing Land, Soils & Geology Issues

County Meath's land, soil and geological resources support agriculture, biodiversity, groundwater recharge, carbon storage and economic activity. Population growth, urban expansion and infrastructure development continue to place pressure on these resources, particularly through the loss of greenfield land and the permanent sealing of soils. Balancing future development needs with the protection of productive agricultural land, soil functions and geological heritage remains a key environmental challenge.

The principal land, soil and geology issues relevant to County Meath include:

- Loss of agricultural land and soils through urban expansion, infrastructure development and other land-use changes.
- Soil sealing and degradation, reducing soil functionality, agricultural productivity, biodiversity value and water infiltration capacity.
- Soil contamination arising from historical land uses, unauthorised waste activities, accidental spillages and industrial activities, with potential implications for human health and environmental quality.
- Soil erosion and compaction associated with intensive agricultural practices, forestry operations, quarrying and major infrastructure projects.
- Risks to water quality resulting from the disturbance of contaminated soils, increased sedimentation and changes to natural drainage patterns.
- Loss of soil carbon stocks through land-use change and soil disturbance, reducing the contribution of soils to climate change mitigation.
- Protection of geological heritage sites and geodiversity features from adverse impacts associated with development and resource extraction.
- Protection of groundwater resources and aquifers, which are important sources of water supply and support dependent ecosystems.
- Potential impacts from quarrying and mineral extraction, including effects on groundwater levels, hydrogeology, landscape character and environmental quality.

1.5 Water Quality

Water is a vital natural resource that supports human health, biodiversity, economic activity and ecosystem functioning. Surface waters and groundwater provide essential resources for drinking water, agriculture, industry, recreation and tourism, while also supporting a wide range of aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Protecting and enhancing water quality is therefore fundamental to achieving environmental sustainability and maintaining ecosystem resilience.

County Meath contains a diverse and extensive water environment comprising rivers, streams, lakes, estuarine waters, coastal waters and groundwater bodies. Key water features include the River Boyne catchment, its tributaries and associated wetlands, together with the County's coastal waters along the Irish Sea. These water resources support biodiversity, landscape character, fisheries, recreation and economic activity, while also contributing to flood regulation and climate resilience.

For the purposes of this assessment, the water environment includes surface water bodies, groundwater resources and flood risk. Drinking water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure are addressed separately under the Material Assets topic in **Section 1.7**.

1.5.1 The Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) establishes a framework for the protection of both surface water and groundwater waterbodies. Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the WFD 2000/60/EC, which was transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003).

This legislation requires governments to take a holistic approach to managing all their water resources based on natural geographic boundaries, i.e. the river catchment or basin. The WFD establishes a common framework for the sustainable and integrated management of all waters covering groundwater, inland surface waters, transitional waters and coastal waters. The WFD requires Member States to manage all of their waters and ensure that they achieve at least 'good status' by 2015 and beyond. The ultimate deadline for Member States for achievement of 'good' status is 2027 at the latest.

1.5.2 Surface Waterbodies

To facilitate implementation of the WFD, Ireland was initially divided into eight River Basin Districts (RBDs), each with its own River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Since the second planning cycle, a single national River Basin District has been established, providing an integrated approach to water resource management across the country.

The current River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022-2027[18] sets out the measures required to protect and restore rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater bodies, with the objective of achieving at least 'Good Status' for all waters and preventing further deterioration of water quality. The Plan identifies priority actions and investment measures aimed at improving ecological condition, reducing pollution pressures and enhancing the resilience of the water environment.

Water quality is monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the WFD monitoring programme. Water bodies are assessed using ecological, chemical and physico-chemical indicators and are assigned a status ranging from High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad. Monitoring is undertaken across rivers, lakes, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater bodies to assess current conditions and identify trends over time.

Recent WFD assessments indicate that the proportion of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater bodies achieving satisfactory ecological status has decreased, highlighting the continued pressures from urban development, agriculture, wastewater discharges, hydromorphological modifications and other land-use activities. **Table 1.5**, below, has a full list of the WFD Catchments and WFD Sub-Catchments in County Meath

Table 1.5: WFD Catchments and WFD Sub-Catchments in County Meath

Catchment (WFD Catchment Code)	Sub-catchment Name (WFD Sub-catchment Code)
Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee Catchment (06)	Glyde_SC_010 (06_7)
	Dee_SC_010 (06_3)
	Dee_SC_020 (06_1)
	Dee_SC_030 (06_4)

[18] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024). *River Basin Management Plan 2022 - 2027*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/policy-information/river-basin-management-plan-2022-2027/ [Accessed November 2026].

Catchment (WFD Catchment Code)	Sub-catchment Name (WFD Sub-catchment Code)
Boyne Catchment (07)	Moynalty_SC_010 (07_14)
	Blackwater[Kells]_SC_020 (07_10)
	Blackwater[Kells]_SC_030 (07_8)
	Boyne_SC_070 (07_13)
	Boyne_SC_050 (07_12)
	Boyne_SC_100 (07_18)
	Boyne_SC_120 (07_15)
	Boyne_SC_130 (07_17)
	Boyne_SC_110 (07_1)
	Boyne_SC_080 (07_3)
	Boyne_SC_060 (07_20)
	Boyne_SC_090 (07_19)
	Boyne_SC_040 (07_9)
	Boyne_SC_030 (07_2)
	Boyne_SC_010 (07_4)
	Boyne_SC_020 (07_16)
	Blackwater[Longwood]_SC_010 (07_6)
	Deel[Raharney]_SC_010 (07_7)
	Yellow[Castlejordan]_SC_010 (07_11)
	Inny[Shannon]_SC_010 (26F_6)
Upper Shannon Catchment (26F)	Mountnugent_SC_010 (26F_3)
	Inny[Shannon]_SC_020 (26F_7)
Nanny-Delvin Catchment (08)	Nanny[Meath]_SC_020 (08_5)
	Nanny[Meath]_SC_010 (08_4)
	Delvin_SC_010 (08_1)
	Broadmeadow_SC_010 (08_3)
Liffey and Dublin Bay Catchment (09)	Tolka_SC_010 (09_10)
	Liffey_SC_080 (09_5)
	Liffey_SC_100 (09_1)
	RyeWater_SC_010 (09_3)

1.5.3 Surface Water Quality

The EPA's Water Quality in Ireland 2019-2024[19] report provides the most recent assessment of the condition of Ireland's rivers, lakes, groundwaters, estuaries and coastal waters, based on monitoring data collected from over 4,000 surface water bodies and 514 groundwater bodies. The report assesses water quality against the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and tracks changes in water quality over time.

Within County Meath, river waterbody status ranges from High to Poor, although the majority of monitored river water bodies are classified as Moderate or Poor. EPA monitoring data up to 2024 indicates that:

- 1 river waterbody achieved High Status;
- 16 river waterbodies achieved Good Status;
- 37 river waterbodies achieved Moderate Status; and,
- 29 river waterbodies were classified as Poor Status.

These results indicate that while a number of watercourses are achieving the environmental objectives of the WFD, a significant proportion of river water bodies remain under environmental pressure and require improvement.

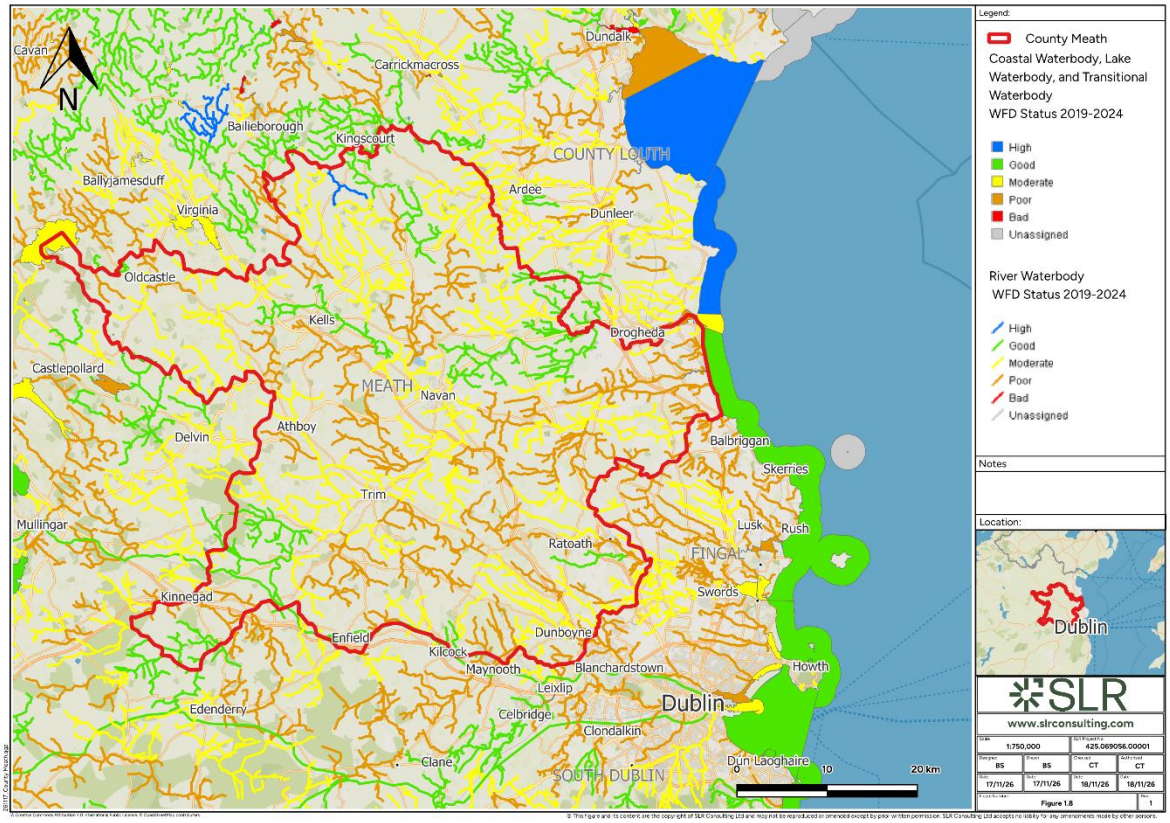
There are eight WFD operational monitoring lakes within County Meath: Lough Sheelin, Lough Doo, Lough Ben, Lough Glass, Lough Ervey, Lough Bracken, Lough Bane and Annagh/White Lake. The most recent lake water quality assessments indicate that Annagh/White Lake achieved High Status; Lough Bane, Lough Ben, Lough Glass and Lough Doo achieved Good Status; Lough Sheelin and Lough Bracken were classified as Moderate Status; and Lough Ervey was classified as Poor Status.

County Meath has approximately 10 km of coastline, extending from the River Boyne estuary at Mornington to Gormanston at the mouth of the River Delvin. The County's coastal waters form part of the Northwestern Irish Sea waterbody, which is currently classified as having Good Status. A small section associated with the Boyne Estuary Plume Zone is classified as Moderate Status. Of the County's transitional waters, the Boyne Estuary is currently classified as Poor Status, while the Nanny Estuary is classified as Moderate Status.

Figure 1.8, below, illustrates the WFD Status for Coastal, River, lake, and Transitional Waterbodies for 2019-2024.

[19] Environmental Protection Agency (2019). *Water quality in Ireland 2019-2024*. [online] Available at: https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/water-quality-in-ireland-2019-2024.php [Accessed November 2026].

Figure 1.8: WFD Waterbody Status 2019-2024



1.5.4 Groundwater Quality

Groundwater is an important natural resource in County Meath, providing a significant source of drinking water for domestic, agricultural and commercial use, particularly in rural areas that are not served by public water supply networks. Groundwater is estimated to supply approximately 20-25% of the County's drinking water needs and also plays an important role in sustaining river flows, wetlands and groundwater-dependent ecosystems, particularly during dry periods.

The EU Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC) promotes the protection and sustainable management of groundwater resources, recognising the interrelationship between groundwater, surface water and ecological receptors. Protecting groundwater quality and quantity is therefore essential for safeguarding water supplies, maintaining ecological integrity and supporting sustainable development.

County Meath contains 46 groundwater bodies, the majority of which were classified as being of Good Status during the 2019-2024 monitoring period. Three groundwater bodies, however, were classified as being of Poor Status:

- Bettystown Groundwater Body (IE_EA_G_016);
- Wilkinstown Groundwater Body (IE_EA_G_010); and
- Inny Groundwater Body (IE_SH_G_110).

Groundwater vulnerability across the County ranges from Low to Extreme, reflecting variations in geology, soil cover and hydrogeological conditions. Areas of high and extreme vulnerability are particularly sensitive to contamination from agricultural activities, wastewater discharges, industrial operations and other land-use practices.

According to the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), the County is underlain predominantly by Regionally Important Aquifers, Locally Important Aquifers (moderately productive in local zones) and areas classified as Poor Aquifers (generally unproductive bedrock), together with more limited deposits of Locally Important Gravel Aquifers. These groundwater resources are important both as water supplies and as contributors to the ecological functioning of rivers, wetlands and other water-dependent habitats. **Figure 1.9** illustrates the Groundwater Vulnerability and **Figure 1.10** illustrates the Gravel and Bedrock Aquifers.

Figure 1.9: Groundwater Vulnerability

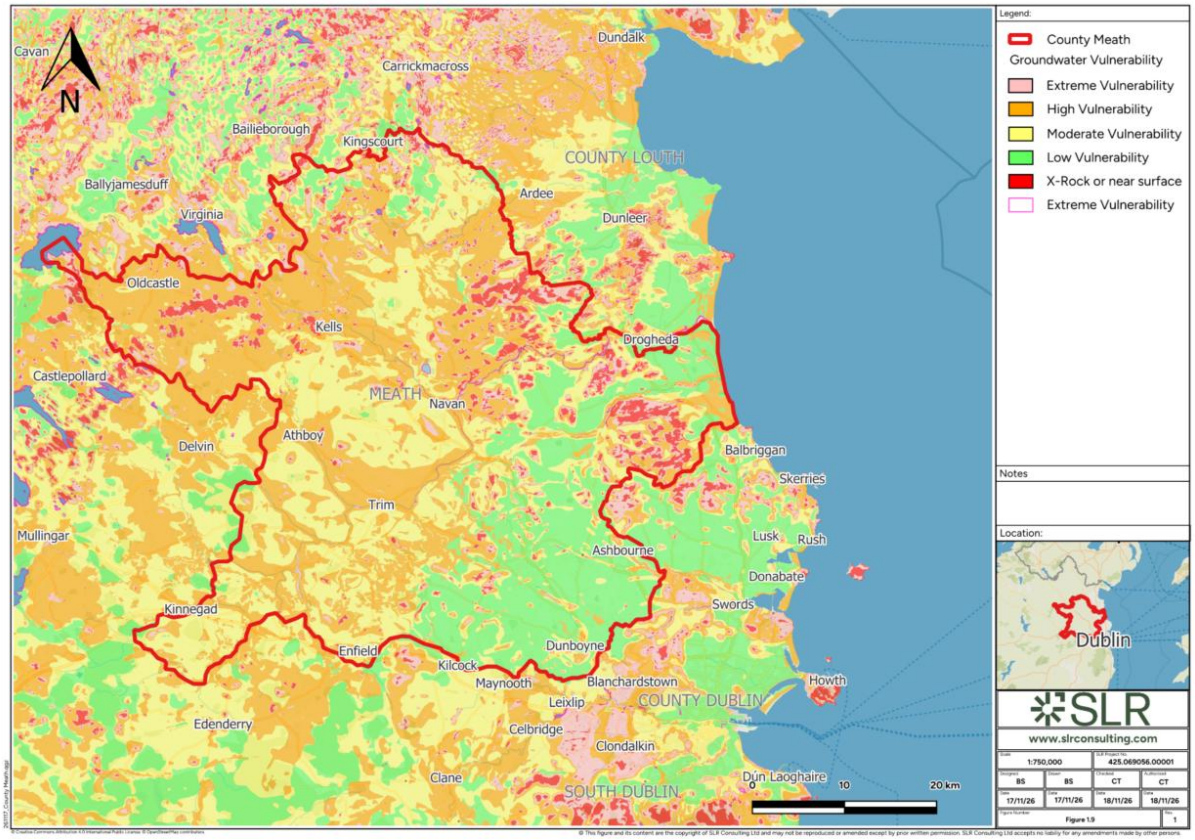
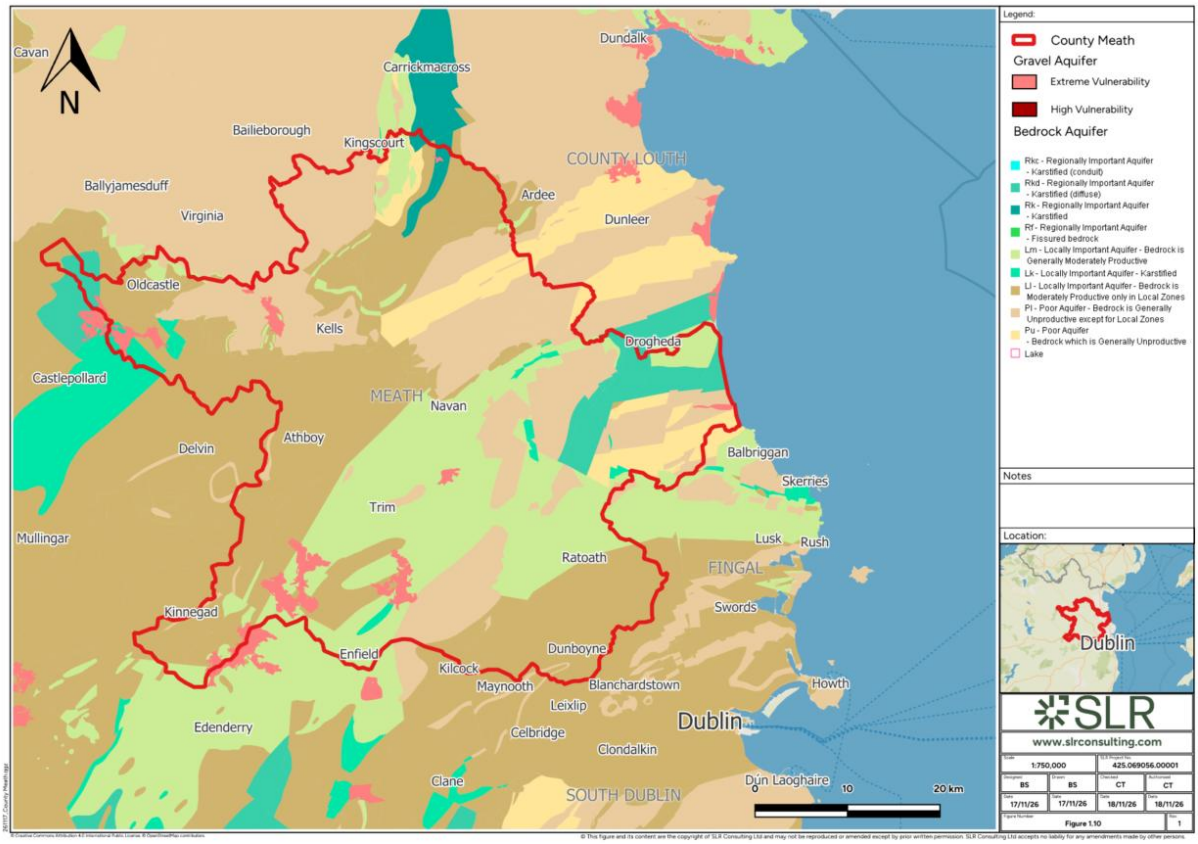


Figure 1.10: Gravel and Bedrock aquifers



1.5.5 Sustainable Urban Drainage

Surface water on all new development sites should be managed through Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in accordance with the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030. SuDS aims to reduce the rate and quantity of surface water runoff and improve water quality from the site. On large developments, SuDS may provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and amenity. The objective of SuDS in new developments is to replicate, as closely as possible, the surface water drainage regime to the predevelopment 'greenfield' situation. This is achieved through the use of surface water source control and site control measures. Source control measures include rainwater harvesting, natural infiltration, infiltration trenches, filter drains, filter strips, swales and permeable paving. Site control measures include attenuation by means of tanks or retention ponds. The surface water runoff rate from the site must be limited to the 'greenfield' runoff rate to reduce the risk of flooding.

1.5.6 Flooding and Flood Risk

Flooding is a natural process that can arise from a combination of factors including prolonged or intense rainfall, river overtopping, coastal surges, groundwater emergence, and inadequate drainage capacity. Increasing levels of urbanisation and the associated expansion of impermeable surfaces can exacerbate flood risk by increasing surface water runoff and reducing natural infiltration.

Flood risk represents an important environmental and planning consideration within County Meath. While the overall extent of flooding has historically been lower than in many other counties, significant flood events have occurred in recent decades, resulting in damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency

and intensity of extreme rainfall events, potentially increasing future flood risk across the County.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead authority for flood risk management in Ireland. A number of flood risk studies have been undertaken within County Meath, including the Fingal East Meath Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (FEM-FRAMS), which assessed flood risk within catchments including the Broadmeadow, Mosney, Delvin, Mayne and Nanny Rivers. Flood risk information is also available through the OPW's national flood mapping programme and has informed strategic land-use planning within the County through the preparation of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and development plans.

As part of the preparation of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030[20], Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plan 2021-2027[21] has been prepared. Over the past number of years there have been significant instances where flooding has occurred in areas of the County causing damage to homes and businesses. However, relative to other counties the extent of flooding in the County has been low.

1.5.7 Coastal Waters

County Meath has approximately 10 km of coastline extending from the Boyne Estuary in the north to the River Delvin Estuary in the south. The County's coastal waters support a range of environmental, economic and recreational functions, including biodiversity conservation, tourism, recreation, fisheries and shellfish production. Much of the coastline is designated for nature conservation, reflecting the ecological importance of its estuarine, intertidal and coastal habitats.

1.5.7.1 Bathing Waters

Bathing water quality in Ireland is monitored under the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC), as transposed by the Bathing Water Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 79 of 2008). Monitoring is undertaken by local authorities and assessed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) against established water quality standards.

County Meath contains an important bathing water location at Laytown/Bettystown, which is monitored annually by the EPA. The most recent assessment classified bathing water quality at this location as Excellent, demonstrating a high standard of coastal water quality and supporting the recreational and tourism value of the County's coastline.

1.5.7.2 Shellfish Areas

County Meath's coastal waters support a range of marine and estuarine habitats and species and are of importance for biodiversity, fisheries and aquaculture. There is one designated Shellfish Water, Balbriggan/Skerries (IE_EA_020_0000), located off the Meath coast.

This area is subject to a Pollution Reduction Programme (PRP) aimed at protecting and improving water quality to support shellfish populations and maintain compliance with relevant environmental standards. The protection of shellfish waters contributes to the conservation of

[20] Meath County Council (2024) *Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied)* online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2030-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

[21] Meath County Council (2024) *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment [*online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

marine ecosystems, supports sustainable shellfish production and helps maintain the ecological quality of coastal waters within the wider region.

1.5.8 Existing Water Quality Issues

The quality of County Meath's water environment is influenced by a range of natural and anthropogenic pressures. While many water bodies achieve satisfactory status, significant challenges remain in meeting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and achieving Good Ecological Status across all waters. Protecting and improving water quality, safeguarding water resources and managing flood risk are therefore key environmental priorities for the County.

The principal water-related issues and pressures relevant to County Meath include:

- Water quality: A significant proportion of rivers, lakes and transitional waters have yet to achieve the WFD objective of Good Ecological Status and require further improvement.
- Nutrient enrichment and eutrophication: Inputs from agricultural activities, wastewater discharges and other diffuse pollution sources can adversely affect surface water quality and aquatic ecosystems.
- Land-use change and development pressures: Urban expansion, agricultural intensification, forestry, industry and infrastructure development can increase pressures on both surface water and groundwater resources.
- Pollution incidents: Inadequate environmental management, accidental spillages, leakages and poor construction practices can result in contamination of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater bodies.
- Groundwater protection: Areas of high groundwater vulnerability are particularly sensitive to contamination from septic tanks, wastewater treatment systems, agricultural activities and other sources of pollution.
- Hydromorphological impacts: Development and construction activities can affect natural drainage patterns, groundwater recharge, sediment transport and the ecological functioning of water bodies.
- Coastal and transitional waters: Estuarine and coastal environments are subject to increasing pressures from population growth, recreational activity, wastewater discharges and wider catchment influences.
- Flood risk: Existing and future development must take account of fluvial, coastal, groundwater and surface water flood risk, particularly in the context of climate change and increasing rainfall intensity.

1.6 Air Quality, Noise and Climate

1.6.1 Air Quality

Good air quality is essential for protecting human health, ecosystems and quality of life. Air pollution can adversely affect respiratory and cardiovascular health, damage sensitive habitats, contribute to climate change and reduce overall environmental quality. National[22] and

[22] Ambient Air Quality Standards Regulations 2022

European[23] legislation seeks to prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment and requires the ongoing assessment and management of ambient air quality.

Air quality in Ireland is monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the national ambient air quality monitoring network. The EPA's most recent assessment, Air Quality in Ireland 2024, indicates that air quality in Ireland generally remains good by international standards, although challenges persist in relation to certain pollutants, particularly fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and emissions associated with transport, domestic heating and agriculture.

For air quality management purposes, Ireland is divided into four air quality zones. Most of County Meath lies within Zone D (Rural Ireland), while Navan and the southern environs of Drogheda are located within Zone C (Other Cities and Large Towns). Air quality monitoring within the County is undertaken at the EPA monitoring station located in Navan.

Air quality is assessed using the Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH), which measures concentrations of key pollutants including:

- Ozone (O_3);
- Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2);
- Sulphur dioxide (SO_2);
- Fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$); and
- Particulate matter (PM_{10}).

Baseline monitoring indicates that air quality within County Meath is generally Good, reflecting the predominantly rural nature of the County and the absence of significant industrial emission sources. However, localised pressures can arise in urban areas and along major transport corridors, where emissions associated with road traffic, domestic heating and development activity may affect air quality.

1.6.2 Noise

Environmental noise can have adverse effects on human health, wellbeing and quality of life. Prolonged exposure to elevated noise levels may contribute to sleep disturbance, stress, annoyance, reduced amenity and, in some cases, adverse cardiovascular health effects. Managing environmental noise is therefore an important aspect of sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC) establishes a framework for assessing and managing environmental noise across Europe. The Directive requires the preparation of strategic noise maps for major roads, railways, airports and urban areas, the assessment of population exposure to environmental noise, and the development of action plans to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful noise impacts where necessary.

In Ireland, the Directive is implemented through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 549 of 2018), as amended. Under these Regulations, Meath County Council has prepared the County Meath Noise Action Plan 2024-2028, which aims to manage environmental noise from major road, rail and industrial sources within the County.

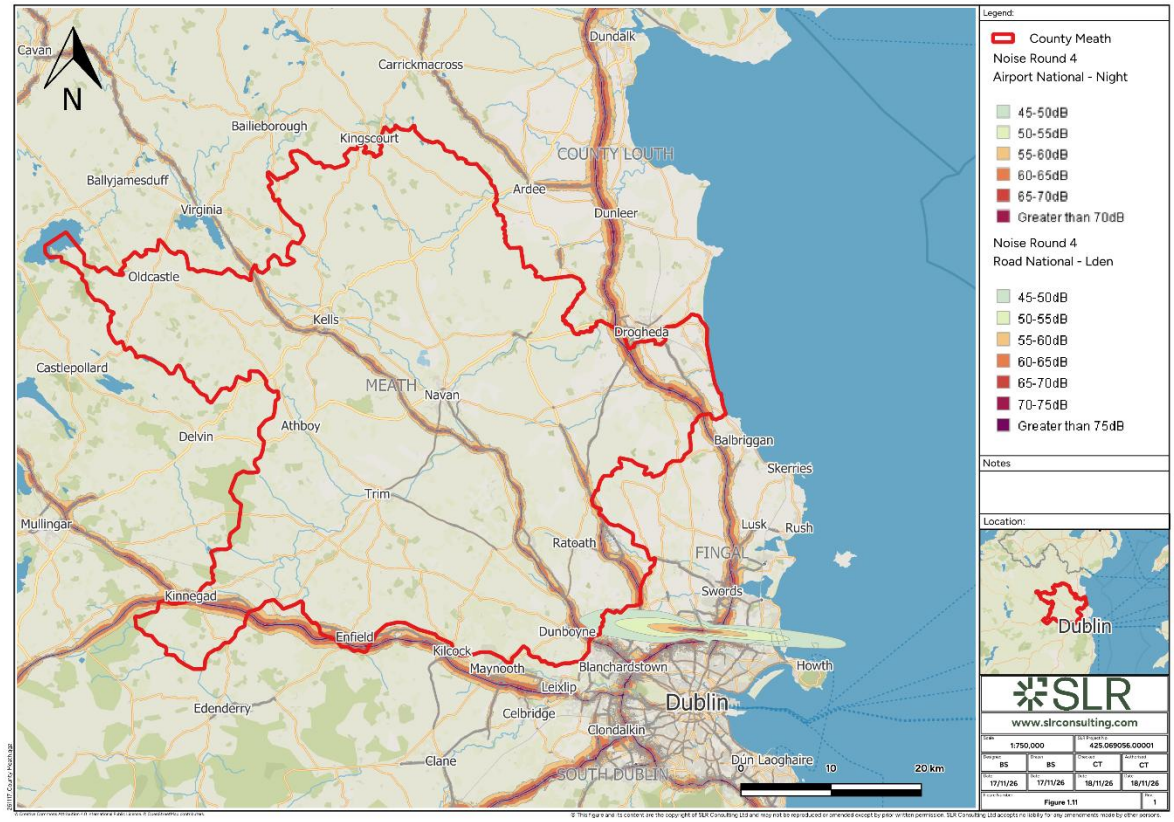
The primary sources of environmental noise within County Meath are associated with:

[23] Directive (EU) 2024/2881 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (recast)

- Major road transport corridors, including the M1, M2, M3 and M4 motorway networks;
- Rail infrastructure and associated transport activity;
- Aircraft movements associated with Dublin Airport flight paths affecting parts of eastern Meath;
- Industrial and commercial activities; and,
- Construction and development activities.

Strategic noise mapping is used to identify areas where noise levels may require management measures, as well as areas where environmental noise quality remains relatively low and should be protected (**Figure 1.11**). Given the County's predominantly rural character, many areas continue to benefit from relatively low background noise levels. However, population growth, increased traffic volumes and ongoing development may give rise to localised noise pressures, particularly within and around larger settlements, transport corridors and employment areas.

Figure 1.11: EPA Noise Map for National Road (Lden) and Airport (Night)



1.6.3 Climate Change

Climate change is a significant environmental challenge with implications for human health, biodiversity, water resources, infrastructure, agriculture, the economy and overall quality of life. It is driven by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs), primarily carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O), arising from sectors such as energy generation, transport, agriculture, industry and land use. Reducing emissions and increasing resilience to climate impacts are therefore central elements of sustainable development policy at international, national and local levels.

Ireland is already experiencing the effects of climate change, including rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Climate projections indicate warmer temperatures, wetter winters, more intense rainfall events, increased flood risk, rising sea levels and greater pressure on water resources, ecosystems and infrastructure. These changes are expected to have significant implications for coastal areas, river catchments, agriculture, biodiversity and human health.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 established a legally binding framework for climate action in Ireland and commits the State to achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050. The Climate Action Plan 2025[24] sets out the national roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing climate resilience, supported by legally binding carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. Ireland is also required to meet EU greenhouse gas reduction targets, including significant reductions in emissions from sectors outside the Emissions Trading System (ETS).

Climate change is a key consideration for County Meath given its growing population, extensive agricultural land base, important river catchments and coastal environment. Future climate conditions are likely to increase the risk of flooding, place additional pressure on water resources and ecosystems, and affect the resilience of communities and infrastructure. Strategic planning therefore plays an important role in supporting climate mitigation and adaptation measures, including sustainable settlement patterns, renewable energy, low-carbon transport, flood risk management and the protection of natural carbon stores.

At the local level, the Meath Climate Action Plan 2024-2029[25] establishes a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing climate resilience across sectors including energy, buildings, transport, agriculture, forestry and land use. The Plan supports the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future while contributing to national and regional climate objectives.

1.6.4 Existing Air Quality, Noise & Climate Change Issues

County Meath generally benefits from good ambient air quality and relatively low background noise levels, reflecting its predominantly rural character. However, ongoing population growth, increased traffic volumes and future development have the potential to place increasing pressure on air quality, environmental noise and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, climate change is expected to present increasing risks to communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and economic activity across the County.

The principal issues and pressures relevant to County Meath include:

- Air quality impacts from transport, agriculture and industry, which remain the primary sources of emissions affecting ambient air quality;
- Localised air quality pressures associated with population growth, urban expansion and increasing traffic volumes, particularly within larger settlements and along major transport corridors;
- Construction-related impacts, including temporary dust, emissions and noise arising from development and infrastructure projects;

[24] Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2025). *Climate Action Plan 2025*. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/ [Accessed November 2026].

[25] Meath County Council. (2024). [online] Available at: https://www.meath.ie/climateaction [Accessed November 2026].

- Environmental noise impacts from road traffic, rail infrastructure, aircraft movements, industrial activities and construction works, particularly near sensitive receptors;
- Greenhouse gas emissions from transport, agriculture, buildings and energy use, which contribute to climate change and require ongoing reduction in line with national and EU targets;
- Flood risk associated with climate change, including increased rainfall intensity, more frequent extreme weather events and greater surface water, fluvial and coastal flooding;
- Coastal vulnerability, including the potential effects of sea-level rise, coastal erosion and storm surge events on communities, infrastructure and natural habitats along the County's coastline;
- Water resource pressures, including the potential impacts of changing rainfall patterns, drought conditions and extreme weather events on water supply and water quality; and,
- Climate resilience of communities and infrastructure, ensuring that future development can adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.

1.7 Material Assets

Material assets are resources that are valued and intrinsic to a development and the surrounding area.

Material assets may be of either natural or human origin and the value may arise for economic or cultural reasons. Material assets include water supply, wastewater treatment infrastructure, waste disposal including recycling, transport infrastructure (road, rail, airports and ports), energy and supply networks and telecom services. Material assets also include economic assets such as coastal and water resources which support fisheries and aquaculture. The sustainable growth of the County is dependent on the provision of services and infrastructure.

1.7.1 Water Supply and Wastewater Services

1.7.1.1 Water Services and Water Supply

The availability of water and wastewater infrastructure is a key determinant of sustainable growth and development within County Meath. Public water supply and wastewater services are provided and maintained by Uisce Éireann, which is responsible for the planning, operation and development of strategic water services infrastructure. The long-term provision of services is guided by the Water Services Strategic Plan 2050 (WSSP)[26], which sets out a national framework for the delivery of resilient, sustainable and high-quality water services.

Public drinking water quality is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Drinking Water Regulations. The EPA's *Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2025*[27] report identifies the continued importance of protecting water sources, maintaining treatment infrastructure and reducing demand through water conservation measures. Initiatives such as leakage reduction, pressure management and demand management continue to improve

[26] Uisce Éireann. (2025). *Water services strategic plan [*online] Available at: https://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/water-services-strategic [Accessed November 2026].

[27] Environmental Protection Agency (2026) *Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2025*. Wexford: Environmental Protection Agency. Available at: https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/drinking-water-quality-in-public-supplies-2025.php [Accessed November 2026]

network efficiency and support future development capacity. Outside the public network, private wells remain an important source of water supply for some rural dwellings and are the responsibility of individual householders.

1.7.1.2 Wastewater Services

Wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure in County Meath is an essential component of environmental protection and sustainable development. Wastewater discharges are regulated under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC), which requires the collection and treatment of wastewater before discharge to the receiving environment and supports the achievement of Water Framework Directive objectives.

County Meath is served by approximately 40 wastewater treatment plants and an extensive sewer network. While Uisce Éireann provides wastewater collection and treatment services for the majority of the County's settlements, some wastewater is conveyed to treatment facilities outside the County, including the Ringsend, Leixlip and Drogheda wastewater treatment plants.

In rural areas beyond the public sewer network, wastewater is primarily managed through individual septic tanks and proprietary treatment systems. The design, installation and operation of these systems are governed by the EPA's *Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems*[28]*,* which aims to protect groundwater and surface water quality from pollution associated with on-site wastewater treatment.

1.7.2 Waste Management

Waste management in County Meath operates within the framework established by the Waste Management Act, 1996 (as amended)[29], the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030 (NWMPCE) [30], and broader European and national circular economy policies. These frameworks are guided by the waste hierarchy, which prioritises waste prevention, preparation for reuse, recycling, recovery and, as a last resort, disposal.

County Meath is located within the Eastern and Midlands Waste Region, which is covered by the NWMPCE. The Plan seeks to transition Ireland towards a circular economy by reducing waste generation, improving resource efficiency and supporting increased reuse and recycling. National policy is further supported by the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2026-2028[31] and the National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2026-2028[32], which promote more sustainable consumption and resource management practices.

The County is served by a range of waste management facilities, including waste transfer stations, recycling centres, construction and demolition waste facilities, landfill infrastructure

[28] Environmental Protection Agency (2021) *Code of practice: domestic waste water treatment systems (population equivalent ≤ 10)*. Wexford: Environmental Protection Agency.

[29] *Waste Management Act 1996* (No. 10 of 1996) (as amended). Dublin: Law Reform Commission. Available at: https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/1996/act/10/front/revised/en/html [Accessed November 2026]

[30] Regional Waste Management Planning Offices (2024) *National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024–2030*. Available at: https://mywaste.ie/sustainability/circular-living/national-waste-management-plan-for-a-circular-economy-2024-2030/ [Accessed November 2026]

[31] Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2026) *Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2026–2028: Accelerating Action*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/whole-of-government-circular-economy-strategy-2026-2028-accelerating-action/ [Accessed November 2026]

[32] Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2026) *Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2026–2028* [Draft]. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/fa0248a1/Irelands_National_Food_Waste_Prevention_Roadmap_2026-2028_-_Draft.pdf [Accessed November 2026]

and energy recovery facilities. The Indaver Waste-to-Energy Facility at Duleek forms a significant component of regional waste infrastructure. Public recycling facilities are located at Navan, Trim, Kells and Dunboyne, while additional recycling infrastructure is provided through a network of bring banks across the County. Together, these facilities support the collection, recovery and recycling of waste and contribute to the implementation of circular economy objectives at both county and regional levels.

1.7.3 Transport

National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2026-2030[33] is Ireland's national framework for delivering a shift towards more sustainable transport modes and reducing reliance on private car use. The Action Plan supports the Government's target of achieving a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by promoting increased use of active travel and public transport, while improving accessibility and connectivity across the transport network.

The Action Plan sets out measures to strengthen the delivery and governance of sustainable mobility between 2026 and 2030, including the establishment of national leadership and stakeholder engagement structures, the implementation of local "pathfinder" projects, enhanced monitoring through an annual National Household Travel Survey, increased public awareness of sustainable travel options, and the development of a transport research network to support evidence-based decision-making. Collectively, these actions aim to accelerate modal shift, improve transport sustainability, and contribute to Ireland's climate action objectives.

1.7.3.1 Road Network

Road transport plays a critical role in facilitating movement within County Meath and providing access to Dublin, Belfast and other regional centres. The County is traversed by several strategic national routes, including the M1 Dublin-Belfast Motorway, N2 Dublin-Derry corridor, M3 Dublin-Cavan Motorway and M4 Dublin-Galway corridor, which connect the County to the national motorway network and provide access to ports, airports and the wider rail network.

The N51 and N52 national secondary routes provide important east-west and north-south connections between towns within the County and the wider region. The N52 forms a significant strategic route linking Dundalk, Mullingar, Athlone and Tullamore. Given the dispersed settlement pattern across much of the County, private vehicle travel remains an important mode of transport, placing continued importance on the operation and maintenance of the road network. Regional and local roads also play a key role in supporting rural communities, economic activity and access to services.

1.7.3.2 Rail Network

Rail services within and adjacent to County Meath provide important commuter and regional connections to Dublin and other urban centres. Existing rail stations serving the County include Dunboyne, Pace (M3 Parkway), Enfield and Gormanston, while stations in neighbouring counties, including Drogheda, Maynooth, Kilcock, Clonsilla and Balbriggan, are also widely used by Meath residents.

[33] Department of Transport (2026) *Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2026–2030*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/7da21a41/Sustainable_Mobility_Policy_Action_Plan_2026-2030.pdf [Accessed November 2026]

Despite these connections, significant areas of the County, including Navan, currently lack direct rail access. The planned extension of the Navan Rail Line (Phase II) is identified within the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042[34] and would substantially enhance public transport accessibility, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce reliance on private car travel.

1.7.3.3 Bus Services

The County is served by an extensive network of public and private bus services linking settlements within Meath to Dublin and other regional centres. Bus Éireann operates a range of commuter, regional and Expressway services connecting major towns, while additional private operators provide services, particularly within East Meath and along key commuter corridors.

As part of the Greater Dublin Area transport network, several strategic bus corridors traverse County Meath, including routes along the M1, N2/M2, and N3/M3 corridors. These provide important connections between the County and Dublin and form part of ongoing investment programmes aimed at improving journey reliability, reducing congestion and encouraging a shift towards public transport.

1.7.3.4 Walking & Cycling Infrastructure

Walking and cycling infrastructure forms an increasingly important component of the County's transport network and supports wider objectives relating to sustainable mobility, public health and climate action. Active travel infrastructure is concentrated within the County's larger settlements and includes footpaths, pedestrian facilities, cycle routes and greenway developments.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) and Meath County Council continue to invest in active travel infrastructure in accordance with national and regional transport strategies. Ongoing improvements seek to create safe, accessible and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists, improve connectivity between residential areas, schools, employment locations and public transport facilities, and support a greater proportion of local journeys being undertaken by sustainable transport modes. Such measures contribute to reducing transport-related emissions, improving accessibility and enhancing quality of life across the County.

1.7.4 Energy

Energy infrastructure is essential to supporting sustainable growth and the transition to a low-carbon economy in County Meath. National energy policy is guided by the draft Climate Action Plan 2026[35] and the Climate Action Plan 2025[36], the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NECP)[37], and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act

[34] National Transport Authority (2023) *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022–2042*. Dublin: National Transport Authority. Available at: https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Greater-Dublin-Area-Transport-Strategy-2022-42-1.pdf [Accessed November 2026]

[35] Due to be published in December 2026

[36] Government of Ireland (2025) *Climate Action Plan 2025*. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

[37] Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2024) *National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021–2030*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/national-energy-and-climate-plan-necp-2021-2030/ [Accessed November 2026]

2021[38], which collectively seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources.

County Meath is primarily served by the national electricity and gas networks. As population growth, economic development and the electrification of transport and heating increase demand, continued investment in energy infrastructure will be required. The transition to a low-carbon energy system will also increase the importance of electricity grid upgrades, energy storage, smart technologies and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) promotes a shift away from fossil fuels and supports the development of renewable energy generation, community energy projects and smart energy systems. County Meath has potential for a range of renewable energy technologies, including wind, solar, bioenergy, biomass, geothermal energy and energy recovery from waste.

1.7.5 Telecommunications

County Meath benefits from ongoing investment in broadband and telecommunications infrastructure through the National Broadband Plan (NBP)[39], which aims to provide high-speed broadband services to premises not served by commercial network providers. Significant progress has been made nationally in improving digital connectivity through upgrades to broadband networks, metropolitan area networks (MANs), and telecommunications infrastructure.

National digital policy is guided by Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework (2022)[40] and subsequent implementation measures, which seek to support digital transformation across the economy and society, improve connectivity, enhance digital skills and facilitate access to public and commercial services. Continued investment in digital infrastructure is expected to further support remote working, business development, education and innovation throughout County Meath.

1.7.6 Utilities

County Meath is served by national electricity and gas infrastructure, which provide essential services to residential, commercial and industrial users. Electricity transmission infrastructure is managed by EirGrid, while ESB Networks is responsible for the distribution network. Ongoing reinforcement and upgrading of the electricity network is required to support population growth, economic development, renewable energy generation and the increasing electrification of transport and heating.

The natural gas network is operated by Gas Networks Ireland (GNI), which maintains and develops gas infrastructure serving urban centres and businesses within the County. While natural gas continues to play an important role in energy supply, national policy is driving a transition towards lower-carbon energy sources and increased electrification.

Public lighting forms an important element of local infrastructure, contributing to road safety, security and placemaking. However, poorly designed or excessive lighting can contribute to

[38] Ireland (2021) *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* (No. 32 of 2021). Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/enacted/en/html [Accessed November 2026]

[39] Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (2026) *National Broadband Plan*. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/campaigns/national-broadband-plan/ [Accessed November 2026]

[40] Department of the Taoiseach (2022) *Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-taoiseach/publications/harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/ [Accessed November 2026]

light pollution, which may adversely affect local amenity and biodiversity by disrupting the natural behaviour and life cycles of plant and animal species. Consequently, the design and management of public lighting are important considerations in supporting sustainable development and environmental protection.

1.7.7 Existing Material Assets Issues

Population growth and continued economic development within County Meath will increase demand for water services, wastewater treatment, waste management, energy, utilities, digital connectivity and transport infrastructure. Key material assets issues and pressures identified within the County include:

- Water Supply: Growing residential, commercial and industrial development will increase demand for potable water supplies and place additional pressure on existing water resources and distribution networks. Continued investment in water conservation measures, leakage reduction and network upgrades will be required to ensure a secure and resilient water supply.
- Wastewater Services: Increasing development places additional demand on wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure. Capacity constraints within wastewater networks and treatment plants can limit development and may contribute to risks to surface water and groundwater quality if not adequately addressed. Future growth should be aligned with the availability of appropriate wastewater infrastructure and treatment capacity.
- Transport Infrastructure: The County remains highly dependent on road-based transport and private vehicle use, particularly in rural areas and commuter settlements. Population growth is likely to increase traffic volumes and congestion unless supported by enhanced public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure. Transport infrastructure development can also result in pressures on biodiversity, landscape character, air quality and climate objectives through habitat fragmentation and increased emissions.
- Energy Infrastructure: The transition to a low-carbon economy requires a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels and increased deployment of renewable energy technologies. Achieving national climate and energy targets will require continued investment in renewable energy generation, electricity networks, energy storage, electric vehicle infrastructure and energy-efficient buildings. Growth in population and employment will further increase overall energy demand.
- Digital Connectivity and Telecommunications: The provision of high-quality digital infrastructure is essential to supporting economic competitiveness, remote working and service delivery. Coordinated delivery of telecommunications and broadband infrastructure is required to avoid inefficient network development and ensure equitable access across urban and rural areas.
- Waste Management: Population and economic growth will increase waste generation and place additional demands on waste collection, treatment, recycling and recovery infrastructure. Continued progress towards circular economy objectives will require investment in waste prevention, reuse, recycling and resource recovery facilities.
- Utilities Infrastructure: The provision, maintenance and upgrading of electricity, gas, water, wastewater and telecommunications infrastructure will be necessary to accommodate future growth and ensure the resilience of services throughout the County.
- Light Pollution: Inappropriate or excessive artificial lighting can adversely affect residential amenity, landscape character and biodiversity. The design and

management of public and private lighting infrastructure should seek to minimise light spill and associated environmental effects.

1.8 Cultural Heritage

County Meath contains one of the richest concentrations of cultural heritage assets in Ireland, reflecting continuous human settlement from prehistoric times to the present day. Cultural heritage comprises archaeological sites and monuments, historic buildings and structures, cultural landscapes, historic settlements, industrial heritage, and other assets that contribute to the County's sense of place and identity.

The County is internationally recognised for its exceptional archaeological and architectural heritage, including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, the Hill of Tara, the Loughcrew Cairns, Trim Castle, historic monastic settlements such as Kells, and numerous historic towns, villages, demesnes, estates, churches, mills and canal-related structures. These assets form an important component of Meath's environmental, cultural and tourism resources and contribute significantly to local character, community identity and economic activity.

The management and protection of cultural heritage within the County is supported by national legislation, including the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014[41], the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)[42], and national heritage policy. At the local level, the County Meath Heritage Strategy 2023-2030[43] provides a framework for protecting, promoting and enhancing the County's archaeological, built, natural and cultural heritage resources.

1.8.1 Archaeology

Archaeological heritage includes all material remains of past human activity, whether located above or below ground, underwater, or incorporated within historic structures and landscapes. Archaeological resources are a finite and non-renewable asset that provide valuable evidence of the County's historical development and cultural evolution.

County Meath contains one of the highest concentrations of recorded archaeological monuments in the State, with approximately 1,600 archaeological sites and monuments recorded within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)[44]. These include passage tombs, ringforts, enclosures, standing stones, ecclesiastical sites, castles, tower houses, earthworks and other monument types spanning a wide range of historical periods.

A significant number of archaeological sites within the County are protected as National Monuments[45], including monuments in State ownership or guardianship. Many archaeological assets are concentrated within internationally and nationally important heritage landscapes, particularly the Brú na Bóinne complex, the Tara-Skryne Valley and the Loughcrew Hills. **Figure 1.12** illustrates the Sites and Monuments.

[41] The Oireachtas (2014) *National Monuments Acts 1930-2014*. Dublin: Government of Ireland.

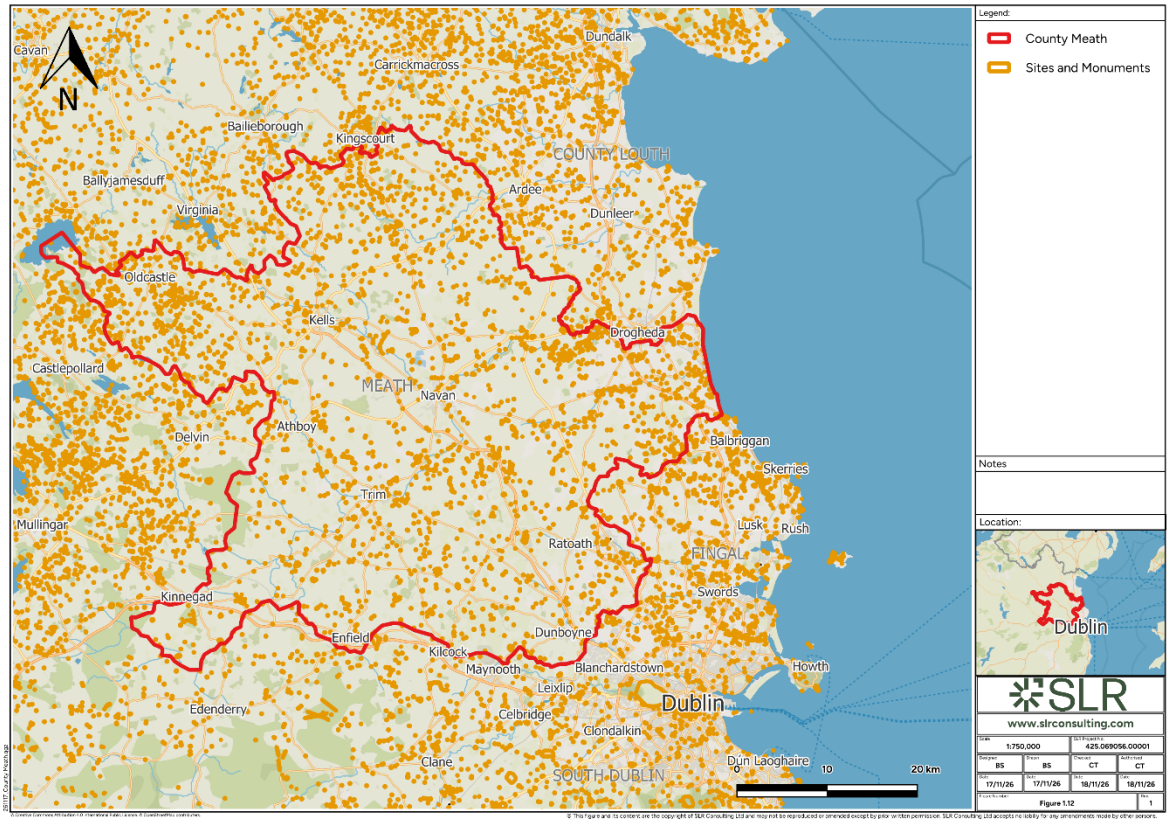
[42] The Oireachtas (2000) *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended). Dublin: Government of Ireland.

[43] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2023) *County Meath Heritage Strategy 2023-2030*.

[44] National Monuments Service (2026) *Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)*. Dublin: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Available at: https://www.archaeology.ie [Accessed November 2026]

[45] National Monuments Service (2026) *National Monuments in State Care*. Dublin: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Available at: https://www.archaeology.ie [Accessed November 2026]

Figure 1.12: Sites and Monuments Record



Archaeological remains that are not currently recorded may also survive beneath the ground surface. As a result, archaeological discoveries continue to occur through development-related investigations and licensed archaeological excavations undertaken throughout the County. The protection and appropriate management of both known and previously unidentified archaeological resources remain important considerations in land-use planning and development management.

The County's archaeological resource forms an integral part of its cultural identity and contributes significantly to education, research, tourism and community understanding of the historic environment.

1.8.1.1 UNESCO World Heritage Sites

County Meath contains the internationally significant Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site[46], which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. Located within the Boyne Valley, Brú na Bóinne comprises a concentration of prehistoric monuments of exceptional archaeological importance, including the passage tomb complexes at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The site contains one of the largest collections of megalithic art in Europe and provides evidence of human settlement and activity extending over several millennia.

The World Heritage Site represents one of Ireland's most important cultural heritage assets and is recognised for its Outstanding Universal Value. In addition to its archaeological significance, Brú na Bóinne contributes substantially to tourism, education, research and the

[46] UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2026) *Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne (Brú na Bóinne)*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org [Accessed November 2026]

local economy. The protection, conservation and appropriate management of the site and its wider setting remain key considerations in spatial planning and development management within County Meath.

1.8.1.2 UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List

The UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List identifies sites that may be considered for future nomination to the World Heritage List. County Meath is represented on Ireland's current Tentative List through the Royal Sites of Ireland nomination[47], which includes the Hill of Tara. The proposed serial transboundary nomination also incorporates associated royal ceremonial sites elsewhere on the island of Ireland.

The Hill of Tara is one of the most significant archaeological and cultural landscapes in Ireland and contains a complex assemblage of prehistoric and early medieval monuments associated with kingship, ceremony and governance. Its inclusion on the Tentative List reflects its potential Outstanding Universal Value and the importance of protecting its archaeological and landscape setting.

1.8.2 Architectural Heritage

Architectural heritage encompasses historic buildings, structures, streetscapes, designed landscapes and other built assets that possess architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social or technical significance. The architectural heritage of County Meath contributes substantially to local character, sense of place and cultural identity.

The County contains a diverse range of heritage assets, including historic town centres, vernacular buildings, churches, country houses, demesnes, bridges, industrial heritage features and public buildings. These assets provide an important record of the County's social, cultural and economic development and contribute to the attractiveness of the area as a place to live, work and visit.

Climate change presents increasing risks to the historic environment through flooding, erosion, changing weather patterns and the deterioration of historic fabric. National policy recognises the need to improve the resilience of built heritage assets and to ensure that adaptation measures are integrated into heritage management and conservation practices.

1.8.2.1 Record of Protected Structures

The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) identifies buildings and structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest that are protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Protection extends not only to the structure itself, but also to its interior, curtilage, attendant grounds and associated features where relevant.

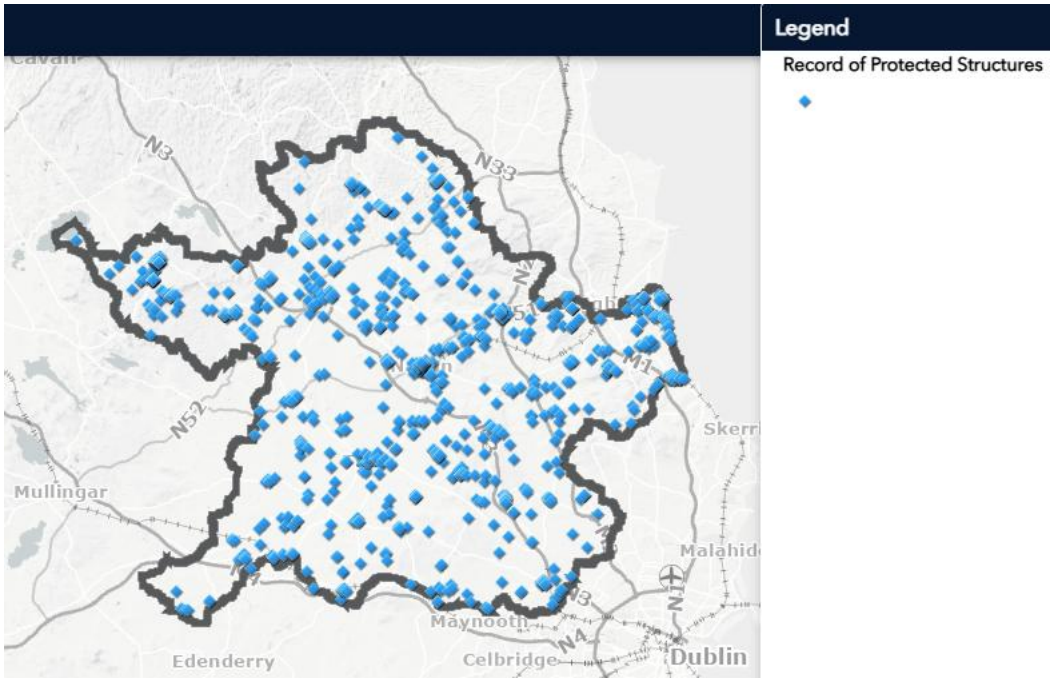
County Meath contains a substantial number of protected structures, reflecting the County's rich architectural legacy. In addition, numerous buildings and structures have been identified through the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)[48] as possessing heritage significance. These resources contribute to the distinctive character of towns, villages and rural areas throughout the County and represent an important component of its cultural

[47] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2022) *Ireland's Tentative List for Future World Heritage Nominations*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4f353-irelands-tentative-list-for-world-heritage-nominations/ [Accessed November 2026]

[48] The Oireachtas (1999) *Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie [Accessed: November 2026]

heritage baseline. **Figure 1.13**, below, illustrates the Record of Protect Structures in County Meath.

Figure 1.13: Record of Protected Structures[49]



1.8.2.2 Architectural Conservation Areas

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) are areas of special architectural, historical, cultural, archaeological, social or technical interest, the character and appearance of which it is an objective to preserve or enhance. ACAs provide protection not only to individual buildings, but also to the wider streetscape, settlement pattern, landscape setting and historic character that contribute to an area's significance.

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), any proposed development within an ACA must be assessed with regard to its potential effects on the character and special interest of the designated area. While alteration, extension and new development are not precluded, proposals are required to respect and complement the established character, scale, form, materials and architectural qualities of the ACA. There is generally a presumption in favour of retaining buildings and features that make a positive contribution to the area's historic character, and planning permission is normally required for the substantial or complete demolition of structures within an ACA.

County Meath contains 23 Architectural Conservation Areas, reflecting the County's rich architectural heritage and the importance of protecting historic town centres, villages, demesnes and designed landscapes. Designated ACAs include historic cores, estate landscapes and important heritage settlements, such as:

- Ardbraccan Demesne;
- Athboy;

[49] National Monuments Service *Historic Environment Viewer* [Online map]. Dublin: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Available at: https://www.archaeology.ie/advice-and-support/locate-a-monument-or-wreck/historic-environment-viewer/ [Accessed November 2026]

- Dunboyne;
- Dunsany Castle Demesne;
- Headfort Demesne;
- Julianstown;
- Kells Historic Core;
- Kells - Headfort Place;
- Kilmessan;
- Laytown - Netterville and Victoria Terrace;
- Longwood;
- Moynalty;
- Navan Historic Core;
- Oldbridge Demesne;
- Oldcastle;
- Slane;
- Slane Castle Demesne;
- Slane Mill Complex;
- Somerville Demesne;
- Stackallen Demesne;
- Summerhill;
- Trim Historic Core; and
- Trim Porch Fields.

These ACAs represent an important component of County Meath's built heritage resource and contribute significantly to local distinctiveness, sense of place, tourism, and the preservation of the County's historic environment.

1.8.3 Existing Cultural Heritage Issues

County Meath's rich archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage assets are vulnerable to a range of pressures associated with population growth, infrastructure provision, climate change and land-use change. The protection and sensitive management of these assets is essential to maintaining the County's cultural identity, sense of place and tourism value.

Key cultural heritage issues and pressures include:

- Development and Infrastructure: New development, transport schemes, utility infrastructure and other forms of land-use change have the potential to adversely affect archaeological sites, historic buildings, protected structures, cultural landscapes and their settings. Development may also impact important views and vistas associated with heritage assets;
- Impacts on Cultural Landscapes: Development in proximity to heritage sites can alter the character and setting of historic landscapes, historic settlements, designed landscapes, demesnes and archaeological complexes, diminishing their cultural significance and visual integrity.



- Subsurface Archaeology: Previously unrecorded archaeological remains may survive below ground and are vulnerable to disturbance from excavation, service installation, road and active travel infrastructure, landscaping, ground levelling, drainage works and tree planting. The identification and protection of buried archaeological resources remains an ongoing challenge;
- Architectural Heritage: Alterations, redevelopment, vacancy, dereliction and inappropriate interventions can erode the character of historic buildings, protected structures, Architectural Conservation Areas and heritage streetscapes, resulting in the gradual loss of local distinctiveness;
- Archaeological Heritage: Archaeological monuments and their settings remain susceptible to direct and indirect impacts from development, agricultural intensification, infrastructure works and changes in land management practices. Protection of both recorded and previously undiscovered archaeological features is a key consideration in planning and development;
- Climate Change: Climate change presents increasing risks to both built and archaeological heritage. Potential impacts include flooding, coastal erosion, increased storm intensity, soil instability, changing groundwater conditions, deterioration of historic fabric, and increased risks from pests, vegetation growth and biological decay. These impacts may occur as sudden events or accumulate gradually over time; and,
- Heritage Assets at Risk: Ongoing assessment, monitoring and management are required to identify heritage assets that may be at risk from neglect, vacancy, structural deterioration, inappropriate alteration, development pressures or climate-related impacts, and to prioritise measures for their protection and conservation.

1.9 Landscape and Visual

Landscape comprises the natural, cultural and visual characteristics of an area and reflects the interaction of geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity, settlement patterns, land use and cultural heritage over time. It contributes significantly to local identity, sense of place and quality of life, while also supporting biodiversity, recreation, tourism and ecosystem services. As both a dynamic and finite resource, landscape is continually influenced by natural processes, human activity and climate change.

Ireland's approach to landscape protection and management is guided by the European Landscape Convention and the National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025[50], which promotes the identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes at national, regional and local levels.

1.9.1 Landscape Character Assessment

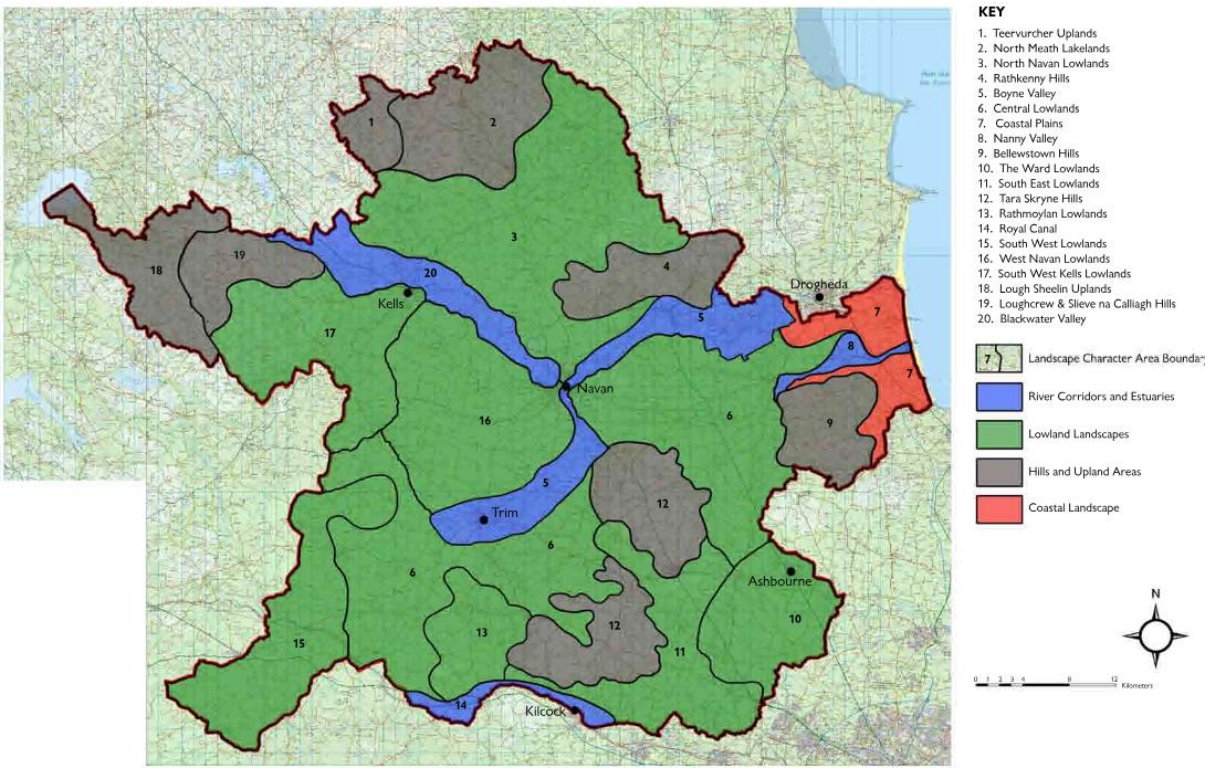
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the principal tool used to identify, describe and evaluate the distinct characteristics of landscapes. Landscape character is defined as the distinct and recognisable pattern of natural and human influences that makes one landscape different from another. LCAs provide an evidence base for understanding landscape sensitivities, capacities and opportunities for future change, and assist in ensuring that development responds appropriately to its landscape setting.

[50] Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (2015) *National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015–2025*. Available at: https://assets.gov.ie/95852/388d4758-50c1-42bd-9adc-0bdfe1291765.pdf [Accessed November 2026]

1.9.2 Landscape Character Types

County Meath contains a diverse range of landscapes, reflecting variations in topography, geology, hydrology, land use and cultural heritage. The County Landscape Character Assessment identifies four principal Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which are further subdivided into 20 geographically distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). These areas are shown on **Figure 1.14.**

Figure 1.14: Landscape Character Areas in County Meath[51]



The principal Landscape Character Types within County Meath comprise:

- Hills and Upland Areas;
- Lowland Areas;
- River Corridors and Estuaries; and,
- Coastal Areas.

Each Landscape Character Area has been assessed in terms of its landscape value, sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change. The study area is located within the Coastal Landscape Character Type, specifically the Coastal Plain Landscape Character Area, which is characterised by a relatively open coastal landscape, extensive views and a strong relationship with the Irish Sea.

[51] Meath County Council (2024) *Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied)* online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

1.9.3 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate change without unacceptable effects on its character. Sensitivity assessments consider factors such as landform, vegetation cover, historic features, settlement pattern, visibility and the number and distribution of receptors.

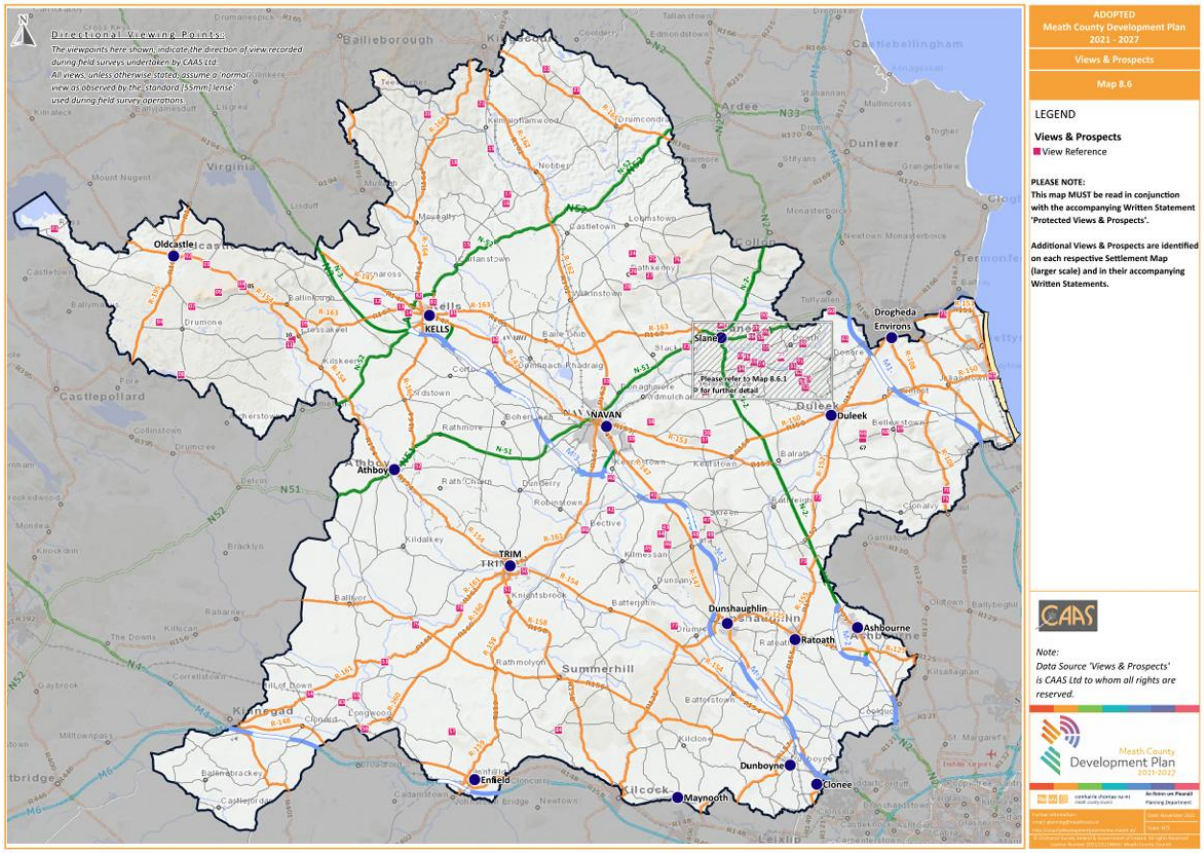
Within County Meath, landscape sensitivity ranges from low to exceptional. Areas of high or exceptional sensitivity are generally associated with nationally important heritage landscapes, river valleys, uplands and scenic areas where the capacity to absorb new development is limited. These landscapes are more susceptible to visual intrusion, fragmentation and changes to character arising from inappropriate development.

1.9.4 Protected Views and Prospects

The County's varied topography, river valleys, heritage landscapes and coastline provide numerous scenic views and prospects that contribute to landscape character, amenity and tourism value. The protection of these views forms an important component of landscape policy and seeks to ensure that development does not adversely affect visually sensitive locations or key landscape features.

Approximately 94 protected views and prospects have been identified throughout County Meath and are illustrated on **Figure 1.15**. These include views from elevated landscapes, river corridors, heritage sites, coastal locations and other publicly accessible vantage points that contribute to the County's visual amenity and sense of place.

Figure 1.15: Protected Views and Prospects in County Meath[52]



1.9.5 Habitats and Landscape Features of Biodiversity Importance

Many important habitats and ecological corridors occur outside designated nature conservation sites and form an integral part of the wider landscape. Features such as hedgerows, woodland, rivers, streams, canals, wetlands, saltmarshes, sand dunes, stone walls and drainage ditches contribute both to landscape character and biodiversity.

These features provide connectivity between habitats and facilitate species movement across the landscape. Their retention, protection and enhancement are important for maintaining ecological resilience, supporting ecosystem services and sustaining the green infrastructure network throughout the County.

1.9.6 Existing Landscape and Visual Issues

Landscape is a dynamic resource that is continually shaped by natural processes, land management practices, development pressures and climate change. Population growth and associated development can place increasing pressure on sensitive landscapes, particularly where development is poorly located or designed.

The principal landscape and visual issues and pressures within County Meath include:

[52] Meath County Council (2024) *Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied)* online] Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-varied/chapter/map-542-dublin-airport-safety-zonesextents-meath [Accessed November 2026]

- Development Pressure: Residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure development have the potential to affect landscape character, visual amenity and scenic quality, particularly within sensitive landscapes and prominent locations.
- Landscape Sensitivity: Highly sensitive landscapes often have limited capacity to accommodate change without adverse effects on their character, setting or visual quality.
- Green Infrastructure Fragmentation: Urban expansion and infrastructure development can result in the fragmentation or loss of green infrastructure assets, ecological corridors and landscape features that contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Ecosystem Services: Protecting and enhancing landscapes that provide ecosystem services, including flood regulation, carbon storage, biodiversity support, recreation and amenity value, remains an important consideration.
- Coastal Development: Development within coastal landscapes has the potential to alter the character of the coastline, affect important views and increase visual pressures on highly valued coastal environments.
- Climate Change: Climate change is likely to influence landscape character through coastal erosion, flooding, changing land-use patterns, vegetation change and increased pressure for renewable energy and adaptation infrastructure

1.10 Interactions and Cumulative Impacts

The environment is both complex and dynamic and the various elements of the environment interact in an equally complex and dynamic manner. The permutations can be numerous, however, at a basic level the principal interactions can be either qualified or quantified in most instances. Interactions between various elements of the variation are considered in the SEA Environmental Report. Equally, an assessment of cumulative impacts arising from measures in the Variation No.6 is included in the Environmental Report.

2.0 Review of Plans, Policies and Programmes

This appendix presents the findings of the review of Policies, Plans and Programmes (PPP) including relevant international, national and local documents undertaken as a part of the Scoping Process (Stage 2) of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Meath County Council (MCC) Draft Variation 6 to the County Development Plan.

The Meath County Development Plan, including Variation No.6, has been prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning and Development Acts, which sets out the statutory requirements and content of a Development Plan and of the proposed Variation. In accordance with the Planning and Development Acts, the Plan, and the Plan as varied, is strategic in nature for the purposes of developing objectives to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. Therefore, the Plan and the proposed Variation has taken account of the statutory obligations of the Council and the relevant policies or objectives of the Government or Ministers of the Government in the preparation of the Draft Variation.

The Variation No. 6 is guided by the National Planning Framework 2018 and first revision April 2025[53], the Climate Action Plan 2025[54], the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region[55], The Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy 2022[56], the Meath Climate Action Plan 2024[57], Eirgrids Data Centre Connection Offer Process and Policy Version 3 (2026)[58], the Large Energy-User Action Plan 2026 published by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment[59] and the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030[60], as varied.

The review of PPP has therefore focused on the documents that could have an influence on the MCC Draft Variation No.6 and is not an exhaustive list of documents prepared in Ireland under each topic.

[53] Government of Ireland (2025) National Planning Framework. Available at: https://www.npf.ie/

[54] Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2025) Climate Action Plan 2025. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/

[55] Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (2019) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031. Available at: https://www.emra.ie/rses/

[56] Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (2022) Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy. Available at: https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/government-statement-on-role-of-data-centres-in-enterprise-strategy.html

[57] Meath County Council (2024) Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. Available at: https://www.meath.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2024-02/Climate%20Action%20Plan%202024%20-%202029_0.pdf

[58] Eirgrid (2026) Date Centre Connection Offer Process and Policy Version 3. Available at: https://www.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Data-Centre-Technical-Assessment-May-2026.pdf

[59] Government of Ireland (2026) Large Energy-User Action Plan. Available at: https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/leap-large-energy-user-action-plan.pdf

[60] Meath County Council, County Development Plan. Available at: https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/consolidated-meath-county-development-plan-2021-2027-as-varied

Table A 2.1: Legislative Framework

Legislative Framework	
Planning and Development Act 2024, as amended (subject to phased commencement)	Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)
Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended	Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)
Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended	Directive (EU) 2024/2881 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe *(merging and replacing Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC)*
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EEC)	Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001 as amended by Directive (EU) 2023/2413 (RED III)
European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended	European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended
Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by Directive (2014/52/EU)	EU 2030 Climate and Energy Framework / Fit for 55 Package & European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119)
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	REPowerEU Plan (2022)
Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)	European Landscape Convention 2000
Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC)	Wildlife Acts 1976–2024
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	Water Services Acts 2007–2022
Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)	Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 & Foreshore Act 1933, as amended
Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (EU) 2024/3019 *(recast of Directive 91/271/EEC)*	Aquaculture Act 1997, as amended
Recast Drinking Water Directive (EU) 2020/2184 & European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 99 of 2023)	Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006
Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), as amended	Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 *(replacing the National Monuments Acts 1930–2014 on phased commencement)*
EU Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC), as amended	Roads Act 1993, as amended
European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea-Fisheries) Regulations 2013, as amended	Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended

Table A 2.2: Relevant National and Regional Plans, Programmes and Guidelines

National and Regional Plans, Programmes and Guidelines	
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework – First Revision (April 2025)	Construction 2020: A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector
Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2021–2030 & Revised National Development Plan (July 2025)	Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021) & Annual Action Plan Updates
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019–2031	Housing First National Implementation Plan 2022–2026
Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan for Dublin (MASP) (2019)	Vacant Homes Action Plan 2023–2026
Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025 & Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027	National Biomethane Strategy (2024)
Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024 (EPA)	Offshore Renewable Energy Future Framework Policy Statement (2024)
Ireland's Second SDG National Implementation Plan 2022–2024	Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019)
National Adaptation Framework (2024)	Transport Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019)
Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) & Sectoral Emissions Ceilings (2022)	National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) (2019)
Ireland's Final Updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021–2030 (2024)	Clean Air Strategy for Ireland (2023)
Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 (2023)	EirGrid Grid Implementation Plan 2023–2028 (2024) & Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap v1.1 (2023)
Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy (2022)	EirGrid Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2023
Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP) (January 2026)	CRU Large Energy Users Connection Policy Decision Paper (CRU/2025236, December 2025)
National Policy Statement on Electricity Interconnection (2023)	Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014)
Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030	National En-Route EV Charging Network Plan (2024) & ZEVI EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022–2025
Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites	NTA Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022–2042
All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2026–2030	National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022) & All-Island Strategic Rail Review (2024)
Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth: An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland	Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)

National and Regional Plans, Programmes and Guidelines	
Fisheries Natura Plans	Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030	Heritage Ireland 2030
Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (2022–2027)	Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019)
National CFRAM Programme & Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study	National Landscape Strategy 2015–2025 *(under review)*
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)	National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024–2030
Uisce Éireann Water Services Strategic Plan 2050 (WSSP 2050)	EPA National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2021–2027
Water Services Policy Statement 2018–2025	A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020–2025 & Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy
Uisce Éireann National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) & Regional Water Resources Plan – Eastern and Midlands	A New Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development to 2030 (2024)
National Marine Planning Framework (2021)	Food Vision 2030 – A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems (2021)
National Broadband Plan & Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework (2022)	Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021–2025 & National Physical Activity Framework 2024–2040
Ready, Steady, Play: National Play Strategy Guidelines	Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021–2024

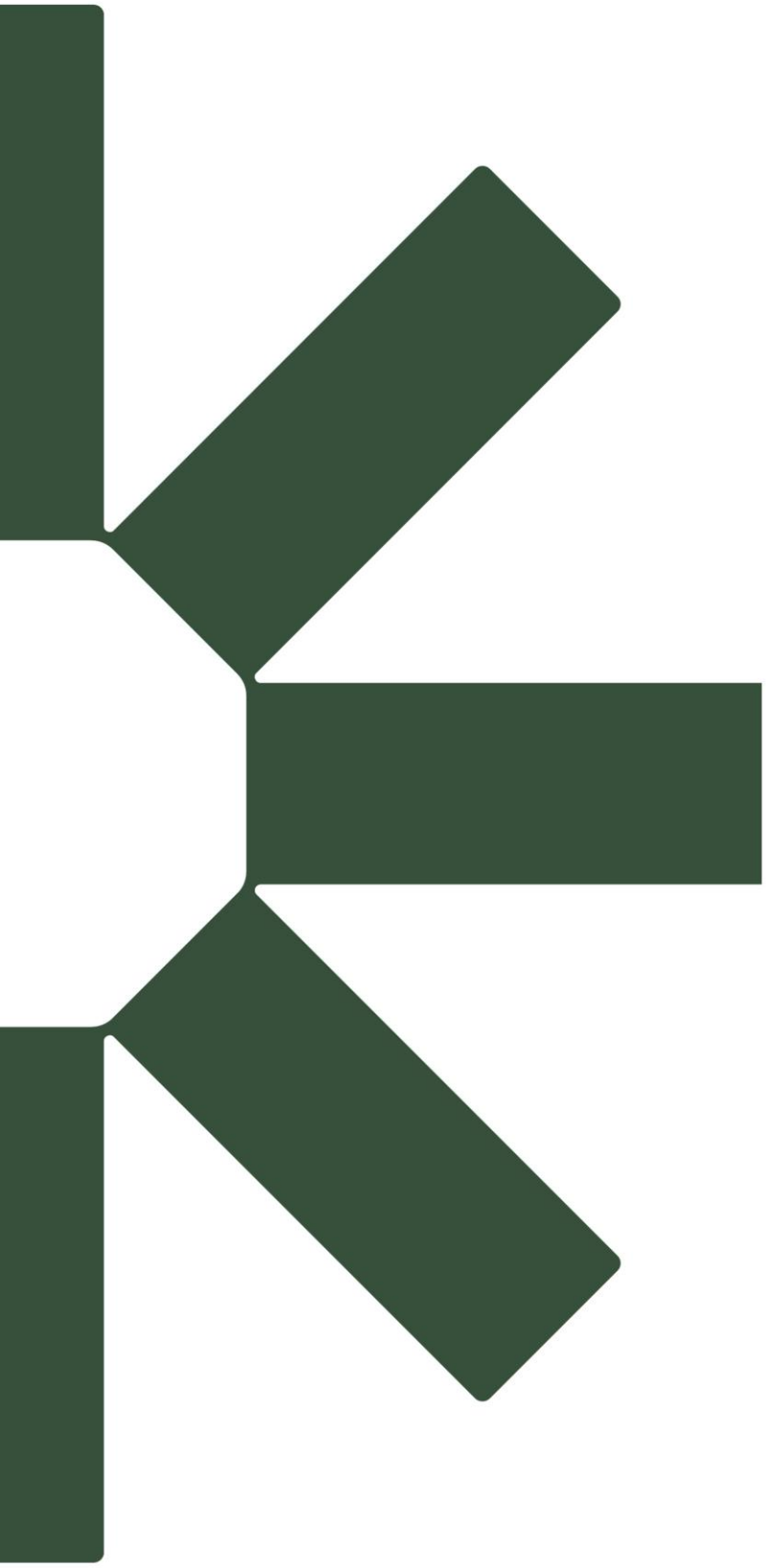
Table A 2.3: Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines

Section 28 Guidelines	
Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (January 2024)	Urban Development and Building Heights: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020)
Design Standards for Apartments: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (July 2025)	Guidelines for Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála (now An Coimisiún Pleanála) on Carrying Out Environmental Impact Assessments (2018)
Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2019, as updated by Circular RW 12/2023)	Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change (2017)
Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – Guidelines (2017)	Development Contributions: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)
Local Area Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013)	Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)

Section 28 Guidelines	
Retail Planning: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)	The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)
Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009)	The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice (2008)
Development Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)	Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)
Wind Energy Development: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2006) & Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019)	Implementation of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (2004)
Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004)	Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)
Telecommunications Antennae Support Structures: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1996)	Tree Preservation Guidelines (1994)

Table A 2.4: Relevant Local Plans and Programmes

Local Plans and Programmes	
Consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021–2030 *(incorporating Variations Nos. 1–5)*	Meath Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023–2029
Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2024–2029	Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2025
Meath County Council Climate Action Plan 2024–2029	County Meath Heritage Strategy 2024–2030
Meath Economic Development Roadmap (2023)	Boyne Valley Food Development Strategy 2024–2028
Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 *(and successor framework)*	Maynooth & Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025–2031
Proposed Drogheda Joint Urban Area Plan *(in preparation)*	Adjoining County Development Plans *(Fingal CDP 2023–2029, Kildare CDP 2023–2029, Westmeath CDP 2021–2027, Louth CDP 2021–2027, Cavan CDP 2022–2028, Monaghan CDP 2019–2025)*



Making Sustainability Happen

Appendix B Assessment of the Draft Variation No.6

Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath County Council

SLR Project No.: 425.069056.00001

20 November 2026

Meath County Council

Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment Appendix B: Assessment of Draft Variation No.6 and Alternatives

Prepared by:
SLR Consulting Ltd.

Date:
20/11/2026

Project number:
425.069056.00001

Version:
2

PROJECT DETAILS	
Contract No.:	425.069056.00001
Issue:	2
Project Manager:	JR
Project Author/s:	JR/CT
Project Director:	AOB
Date:	20/11/2026

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VERSION CONTROL RECORD

Issue	Description of Status	Date	Reviewer Initials
1	Draft for Consultation	18/11/2026	KH
2	Minor amends for consultation	20/11/26	KH

Effect	Description	Contributing Factors
	Significance	
Significant Negative Effects (--)	A policy is likely to exacerbate a pre-existing issue in the area and significantly deteriorate the baseline conditions.	Permanent Irreversible Continual Magnitude: High 80%+ receptor or environmental capacity affected; or Medium 40-80% of receptor or environmental capacity of affected The effect could be to: •permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of the receptor; •cause a very high quality receptor to be permanently changed and its quality diminished; •cannot be fully mitigated and may cumulatively amount to a severe adverse effect; •be at a considerable variance to the location, degrading the integrity of the receptor; and/or •will be substantially damaging to a high quality receptor such as a specific regional or national designation.
Minor Negative Effects (-)	A policy has potential to result in an adverse effect, which may deteriorate the baseline condition, however, they do not exacerbate an existing issue.	Reversible Infrequent or intermittent Magnitude: Low 20-40% of receptor or capacity affected. The size, nature and location of a proposed scheme would: •be out of scale with the location; or •leave an adverse impact on a receptor of recognised quality such as a specific district or county designation.
Significant Positive Effects (++)	The policies are likely to lead to significant improvements in baseline conditions.	Permanent Continual Magnitude: High 80%+ receptor or environmental capacity affected; or Medium 40-80% of receptor or environmental capacity of affected The effect could be to: •enhance and redefine the location in a positive manner, making a contribution at a national or international scale; •repair or restore receptors badly damaged or degraded through previous uses; and/or •improve one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of a receptor with recognised quality such as a specific regional or national designation.
Minor Positive Effects (+)	The policies are likely to lead to some improvements in baseline conditions.	Reversible Infrequent or intermittent Magnitude: Low 20-40% of receptor or capacity affected. The size, nature and location of a proposed scheme would: •improve undesignated yet recognised receptor qualities at the neighbourhood scale; •fit into or with the existing location and existing receptor qualities; and/or •enable the restoration of valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.
Uncertain (?)	Uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine the assessment this stage	N/A
Mixed Effects (+/-)	A policy is likely to result in both positive and negative effects against the objective. The policy may improve some aspects of baseline conditions whilst adversely affecting others, resulting in a balanced or mixed outcome overall.	Effects won't cancel eachother out It could be the difference between construction and operational effects Effects will likey be Reversible, infrequent or intermittent Effects are not significant
Neutral (0)	The plan policies are unlikely to alter baseline conditions significantly.	N/A
	Nature of Effects	
Spatial extent	How far the effect is predicted to be spread geographically: Low (L) = A specific area within the LA Medium (M) = Across the entire LA, possibly reaching to neighbouring LAs High (H) = Beyond the LA Local Plan Boundary, with national or international ramifications	
Direct/Indirect	An assessment of whether the predicted effect will be directly (D) as a result of option implementation, or indirectly (I) caused by the policy option.	
Duration	An assessment of the time period the predicted effects are likely to last. This could be: Short (S)= 0-5 years Medium (M) = 5-10 years Long (L)= 10 years or more, up to the end of the Local Plan period	
Permanence	An assessment of whether the predicted effect would be permanent (P) or temporary (T), e.g. construction traffic impacts would typically be temporary (T), whereas the creation of new homes and associated infrastructure would be permanent (P).	
Reversibility	Whether the effect can be reversed following implementation. Effects resulting in permanent changes or losses (e.g. development of greenfield land) are considered irreversible (I), while effects that can be restored or recover over time are considered reversible (R).	
Magnitude	An assessment of the proportion of the receptor affected by the identified effect: Low (L) =20-40% of receptor or capacity affected Medium (M) = 40-80% of receptor affected High (H) =80+% of the receptor affected	

SEA Objective	Policies and Alternative Sites											
	EP OBJ 1	EP OBJ 2	EP OBJ 3	EP OBJ 4	EP OBJ 5	EP OBJ 6	LEU OBJ 1	LEU OBJ 2	Woodlands	Meath Hill	Kinnegad	Gorman
B_1	Uncertain	Minor Negative	Neutral	Minor Negative	Neutral	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
PHH_1	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Neutral	Minor Positive	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2	Neutral	Neutral	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
SG_1	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Positive	Minor Negative	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Minor Negative	Neutral	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Significant Negative
AN_1	Neutral	Mixed	Neutral	Minor Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
AN_2	Neutral	Minor Negative	Neutral	Minor Positive	Neutral	Neutral	Minor Positive	Neutral	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
CC_1	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Neutral	Minor Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Mixed	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Uncertain
MA_1	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Minor Positive	Mixed	Minor Positive	Mixed
CH_1	Uncertain	Uncertain	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
LV_1	Mixed	Minor Negative	Neutral	Minor Negative	Uncertain	Minor Positive	Neutral	Minor Positive	Neutral	Significant Negative	Neutral	Significant Negative

Summary of Signficance - SEA Objectives			
SEA objective	Significant Negative	Significant Positive	Uncertain
B_1	0	1	1
PHH_1	0	1	0
PHH_2	0	0	0
SG_1	0	0	0
W_1	1	1	0
AN_1	0	0	0
AN_2	0	0	0
CC_1	0	6	1
MA_1	0	5	0
CH_1	0	0	2
LV_1	2	0	1

Summary of Signficance - Policies			
Policy	Significant Negative	Significant Positive	Uncertain
EP OBJ 1	0	2	2
EP OBJ 2	0	2	1
EP OBJ 3	0	0	0
EP OBJ 4	0	0	0
EP OBJ 5	0	0	1
EP OBJ 6	0	4	0
LEU OBJ 1	0	2	0
LEU OBJ 2	0	2	0
Meath Hill	0	1	0
Kinnegad	0	0	0
Gorman	2	0	1

SEA Objective	Policies											
	EP OBJ 1	EP OBJ 2	EP OBJ 3	EP OBJ 4	EP OBJ 5	EP OBJ 6	LEU OBJ 1	LEU OBJ 2	Woodlands	Meath Hill	Kinnegad	Gorman
B_1	Uncertain Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain Intra & Inter Cumulative				Uncertain Intra & Inter Cumulative						
PHH_1								Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative				
PHH_2												
SG_1	Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative							Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative		Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative
W_1						Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative		Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative				
AN_1												
AN_2												
CC_1	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative				Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative
MA_1	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative				Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive Intra & Inter Cumulative			
CH_1	Uncertain Intra & Inter Cumulative											
LV_1										Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative		Negative Intra & Inter Cumulative

SEA Objective	Type of Residual Effect	Policies											
		EP OBJ 1	EP OBJ 2	EP OBJ 3	EP OBJ 4	EP OBJ 5	EP OBJ 6	LEU OBJ 1	LEU OBJ 2	Woodlands	Meath Hill	Kinnegad	Gorman
B_1	Residual SA Effects						Significant Positive						
	Residual Cumulative Effects						Significant Positive						
PHH_1	Residual SA Effects								Significant Positive				
	Residual Cumulative Effects								Significant Positive				
PHH_2	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												
SG_1	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												
W_1	Residual SA Effects						Significant Positive						
	Residual Cumulative Effects						Significant Positive		Significant Positive				
AN_1	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												
AN_2	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												
CC_1	Residual SA Effects	Significant Positive	Significant Positive				Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Uncertain	Significant Positive	Significant Positive		
	Residual Cumulative Effects	Significant Positive	Significant Positive				Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Uncertain	Significant Positive	Significant Positive		
MA_1	Residual SA Effects	Significant Positive	Significant Positive				Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive				
	Residual Cumulative Effects	Significant Positive	Significant Positive				Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive	Significant Positive			
CH_1	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												
LV_1	Residual SA Effects												
	Residual Cumulative Effects												

Policy	EP OBJ 1: To support and promote the protection, improvement and expansion of the energy infrastructure assets identified in section 6.15.4.1 (b) as critical to the economic development of the County.														
	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direction of Effect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Uncertain	There is potential for the development and expansion of energy infrastructure to result in effects upon designated sites and protected species depending upon the location and expansion of energy infrastructure assets. Effects are likely to be determined by individual development that may arise.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Where physical grid upgrades or substation compound expansions coincide temporally with adjacent energy infrastructure developments (such as permitted battery storage and synchronous condenser installations), there is potential for incremental cumulative habitat disturbance or localised ecological fragmentation during construction. However, the application of binding ecological protection policies within the parent County Development Plan, alongside project-level Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening, may result in potential positive cumulative effects.	Yes	Natural Heritage policies (HER POL 27–41 and HER OBJ 35–40) require Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening/NIS, protect Natura 2000 and national designated sites, and safeguard protected species, wetlands (HER POL 48), and ecological corridors, supported by INF OBJ 38 (riparian buffers).	Policy LEU 1 embeds overarching plan-level environmental standards, Objective LEU OBJ 3f safeguards ecological flows and water-dependent habitats/species, and Objective LEU OBJ 3i controls noise, vibration, lighting, air emissions (nitrogen deposition), fuel storage, and discharges individually and cumulatively (including during generator testing).	Neutral	Neutral
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	M	S	L	R	Minor Positive	Minor positive effects are anticipated as the implementation of this objective is anticipated to strengthen the security and reliability of electricity supply for communities and businesses across Meath. There is also potential for additional employment opportunities to arise as a result of the implementation of additional energy infrastructure, both during construction and operation.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating in conjunction with national grid reinforcement strategies and the wider Green Energy Park framework within Draft Variation No. 6, the protection and enhancement of critical transmission assets generates a positive cumulative effect on regional security of electricity supply and long-term economic resilience for communities across County Meath. While concurrent utility upgrades could generate temporary, localised cumulative construction noise and traffic movements, these short-term pathways are effectively regulated through standard development management conditions.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	L	L	L	P	Minor Negative	This objective primarily focuses on existing designated energy infrastructure corridors, promoting the efficient use of established utility footprints rather than greenfield sprawl. However, there may be land take and therefore loss of soil resources where existing compounds expand.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Concurrent compound expansions at existing transmission nodes alongside adjacent permitted energy developments contribute to incremental cumulative soil sealing of agricultural land. Nevertheless, by prioritising the protection and intensification of established energy infrastructure corridors rather than dispersed greenfield development, the objective minimises wider cumulative land-take across the county. There is also potential for additional loss of soil resources if developments arise within similar locations and timeframes to other developments arising from both the CDP and individual projects.	Yes	Geological Heritage policies (HER POL 44–46, HER OBJ 44–45, Appendix 11) and Chapter 6 policies (INF POL 19–25) protect County Geological Sites and vulnerable aquifers, while DM OBJ 5 and Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) govern topsoil management and contamination prevention.	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Cumulative physical works across multiple substation compounds and adjacent energy developments within shared surface water catchments could introduce minor incremental runoff pathways. This may also occur as a result of development outside of the CDP.	No	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3d mandates proven water/wastewater capacity prior to operation, Objective LEU OBJ 3e requires water-efficient cooling (recirculation, rainwater/reclaimed water), Objective LEU OBJ 3f restricts routine potable-water cooling and prevents waterbody status deterioration, and Objective LEU OBJ 3j mandates water monitoring.	N/A	Minor Negative
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	H	L	R	P	Significant Positive	This objective is a critical enabler for national and regional decarbonisation. Upgrading and protecting the energy transmission network removes grid bottlenecks, facilitates renewable energy integration, and reduces wind/solar curtailment.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	EP OBJ 1 interacts synergistically with the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Climate Action Plan, EirGrid grid development strategies, and adjacent renewable energy and storage permissions to generate a significant positive cumulative effect on climatic factors. Strengthening bulk transmission capacity directly alleviates grid bottlenecks, facilitates the integration of renewable generation, reduces curtailment, and accelerates regional greenhouse gas emissions reductions.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	D	H	L	R	P	Significant Positive	This objective directly safeguards, maintains, and enhances strategic high-voltage energy transmission infrastructure (38kV–400kV assets) identified as critical to county and regional economic resilience. This is anticipated to support the development of new infrastructure to support Meath's future needs.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with the companion objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 2–6 and LEU OBJ 1–2) and national transmission reinforcement programmes, the safeguarding and expansion of critical substation infrastructure produces a significant positive cumulative effect on material assets. Collectively, these measures enhance overall electricity network capacity, cross-border interconnector efficiency, and long-term infrastructural resilience.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Uncertain	There is potential for the development and expansion of energy infrastructure to result in effects upon designated sites depending upon the location and expansion of energy infrastructure assets. Effects are likely to be determined by individual development that may arise.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	There is potential for cumulative alteration of physical or visual impact pathways to recorded monuments, protected structures, or architectural conservation areas depending on the location of development both arising from the CDP and outside of the CDP.	Yes	Archaeological and Architectural Heritage policies (HER POL 1–28, HER OBJ 1–29, Appendices 6–9) protect Recorded Monuments, Zones of Archaeological Potential, and Protected Structures, requiring Archaeological Impact Assessments and pre-development test trenching/monitoring.	N/A	Neutral	Neutral
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	L	L	L	P	Mixed	The upgrading of existing substations maintains infrastructure within established industrial/utility context, rather than introducing new linear corridors. However, the development of taller apparatus or compound extensions may cause minor negative localised visual effects.	Inter Cumulative	Negative	The expansion of high-voltage substation apparatus alongside adjacent permitted energy storage and grid stability installations, and other developments is anticipated to have cumulative negative effects upon landscape and visual effects.	No	Landscape Character Assessment policies (HER POL 49–52, HER OBJ 45–50, Appendix 5 LCA, Appendix 10 Protected Views) and Chapter 11 Development Management Standards (DM POL 2) mandate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), sympathetic siting/massing, native screen planting, and dark-sky lighting controls. Also LEU OBJ 2.	N/A	Neutral	Neutral

Policy	EP OBJ 2: To support and facilitate the development of a low carbon Green Energy Park at Woodlands adjacent to the existing 400kV substation and East West Interconnector station that integrates renewable energy generation, storage solutions and grid infrastructure while co-locating with large energy users (Volume 3, Map 12 refers).

	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	D	L	M/L	R	P/I	Minor Negative	The conversion of agricultural land has potential to result in localised habitat loss, hedgerow removal, and construction-phase disturbance to local fauna.	Intra Cumulative	Uncertain	Developing a co-located Green Energy Park alongside the existing 400kV substation, East-West Interconnector station, and adjacent permitted energy infrastructure (such as battery storage and synchronous condenser facilities), as well as other development arising from the CDP has the potential to result in cumulative habitat loss and construction-phase disturbance across the wider Woodlands landbank.	Yes	Natural Heritage policies (HER POL 27–41 and HER OBJ 30–40) require Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening/NIS, protect Natura 2000 and national designated sites, and safeguard protected species, wetlands (HER POL 48), and ecological corridors, supported by INF OBJ 38 (riparian buffers).	Policy LEU 1 embeds overarching plan-level environmental standards, Objective LEU OBJ 3f safeguards ecological flows and water-dependent habitats/species, and Objective LEU OBJ 3i controls noise, vibration, lighting, air emissions (nitrogen deposition), fuel storage, and discharges individually and cumulatively (including during generator testing).	Neutral	Neutral
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	This objective enhances energy security and contributes to local economic employment opportunities through the development of the Green Energy Park, while protecting residential amenity through co-location of the development.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	This objective operates in conjunction with national economic and energy security policies, as well as the dedicated regional road access and environmental control objectives within Draft Variation No. 6. There is potential for a positive cumulative effect on local employment, economic resilience, and regional energy reliability.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	M/L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The development of this objective is anticipated to result in the loss of greenfield agricultural land at Woodlands. However, compact co-location beside existing grid assets prevents further greenfield land take elsewhere.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	The physical development of the Green Energy Park alongside existing transmission substations and adjacent permitted energy projects results in incremental cumulative land-take and permanent loss of greenfield agricultural land at Woodlands. However, effects are likely to be determined by the quantity of developments being located on greenfield land within Meath and surrounding counties.	Yes	Geological Heritage policies (HER POL 44–46, HER OBJ 44–45, Appendix 11) and Chapter 6 policies (INF POL 19–25) protect County Geological Sites and vulnerable aquifers, while DM OBJ 5 and Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) govern topsoil management and contamination prevention.	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	Intra Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative increases in surface water runoff arising from multiple developments within the same surface water catchment could reduce water quality. The implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) attenuation, water-efficient or closed-loop cooling technologies, and floodplain avoidance under the Variation and parent County Development Plan could result in positive cumulative effects if implemented across multiple developments.	No	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3d mandates proven water/wastewater capacity prior to operation, Objective LEU OBJ 3e requires water-efficient cooling (recirculation, rainwater/reclaimed water), Objective LEU OBJ 3f restricts routine potable-water cooling and prevents waterbody status deterioration, and Objective LEU OBJ 3j mandates water monitoring.	N/A	Minor Positive
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Mixed	The development of the energy park at Meath Hill has the potential to increase air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, primarily from construction traffic, plant and machinery. However, these effects are expected to be temporary and localised. In the longer term, the generation of renewable energy will support the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon energy system, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributing to improvements in air quality and wider climate change objectives.	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of the energy park at Woodlands has the potential to increase noise levels during the construction phase as a result of site clearance, earthworks, construction traffic and the use of plant and machinery. These effects are expected to be temporary and largely confined to the construction period. Once operational, the scheme may generate low levels of noise associated with renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment; however, these effects are anticipated to be limited and can typically be controlled through design and mitigation measures.	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	D	H	M/L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	The co-location of Large Energy Users with renewable generation and storage directly at the 400kV node and East-West Interconnector reduces transmission losses, absorbs curtailed renewable energy, and lowers regional greenhouse gas emissions.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	EP OBJ 2 interacts synergistically with the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Climate Action Plan, EirGrid transmission strategies, and adjacent renewable energy and storage permissions to deliver a significant positive cumulative effect on climatic factors. Co-locating Large Energy Users directly beside the 400kV substation and East-West Interconnector minimises transmission losses, absorbs curtailed renewable electricity, and accelerates regional greenhouse gas emissions reductions.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	D	H	M/L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	The implementation of this objective directly maximises the operational efficiency and capacity of existing strategic national electricity transmission and interconnector infrastructure at Woodlands. This is anticipated to support the development of new infrastructure to support Meath's future needs.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with the wider policy suite of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 3–6, and LEU OBJ 1–2) and national grid reinforcement programmes, integrating renewable generation, storage, and demand at a primary transmission node generates a significant positive cumulative effect on material assets. Collectively, these measures maximise existing 400kV and interconnector network efficiency while reducing pressure on wider regional transmission corridors.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Uncertain	There is potential for the development and expansion of energy infrastructure to result in effects upon unidentified heritage assets depending upon the location and expansion of energy infrastructure assets. Effects are likely to be determined by individual development that may arise.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Archaeological and Architectural Heritage policies (HER POL 1–26, HER OBJ 1–29, Appendices 6–9) protect Recorded Monuments, Zonas of Archaeological Potential, and Protected Structures, requiring Archaeological Impact Assessments and pre-development test trenching/monitoring.	N/A	Neutral	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	L	M/L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of large-scale energy infrastructure and buildings into an agricultural setting adjacent to existing high-voltage overhead lines and substations is anticipated to result in the alteration of the landscape and visual setting.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	The introduction of large-scale energy buildings and generation/storage infrastructure, alongside development in other rural areas of Meath may result in the alteration of the rural landscape character.	No	Landscape Character Assessment policies (HER POL 49–52, HER OBJ 46–50, Appendix 5 LCA, Appendix 10 Protected Views) and Chapter 11 Development Management Standards (DM POL 2) mandate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), sympathetic siting/massing, native screen planting, and dark-sky lighting controls. Also LEU OBJ 2.	N/A	Neutral	Neutral

Policy	EP OBJ 3: To require the submission of a supporting statement with any planning application on lands identified at Woodlands for a Green Energy Park demonstrating how the development constitutes a 'large energy user' and the suitability of the development at the location.															
	SA Effects								Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct / Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence / Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the ecological protection objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 and the parent County Development Plan, requiring applicants to demonstrate locational suitability and Large Energy User status prevents speculative or non-essential development across the Woodlands landbank. Collectively, this gatekeeping mechanism reduces unnecessary cumulative habitat disturbance and prevents dispersed greenfield ecological fragmentation elsewhere in the county.	No	N/A	N/A	Neutral	Minor Positive
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	This objective ensures that only appropriate, energy-efficient developments compatible with the strategic energy hub are permitted at Woodlands, indirectly protecting local communities from poorly sited industrial land uses.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with project-level assessment criteria under LEU OBJ 2 and national energy planning guidelines, mandatory supporting statements ensure that only energy-efficient, purpose-suited developments compatible with the strategic energy hub are permitted at Woodlands. This contributes to a positive cumulative effect by safeguarding nearby communities from uncoordinated or poorly sited industrial land uses.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	I	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	This objective ensures that only appropriate, energy-efficient developments compatible with the strategic energy hub are permitted at Woodlands, indirectly protecting improving health and wellbeing by preventing poorly sited industrial land uses.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with project-level assessment criteria under LEU OBJ 2 and national energy planning guidelines, mandatory supporting statements ensure that only energy-efficient, purpose-suited developments compatible with the strategic energy hub are permitted at Woodlands. This contributes to a positive cumulative effect by safeguarding nearby communities from uncoordinated or poorly sited industrial land uses.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	This objective prevents speculative or non-energy-intensive land-take at Woodlands, preserving strategic zoned land strictly for Large Energy Users that require direct proximity to bulk transmission infrastructure.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting synergistically with the zoning provisions of Draft Variation No. 6 and national compact growth policies within the National Planning Framework (NPF), EP OBJ 3 produces a positive cumulative effect on land use by reserving scarce, strategically zoned land at Woodlands strictly for verified Large Energy Users that require direct proximity to bulk transmission infrastructure.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	M	L	R	P/R	Minor Positive	Requiring planning applicants to demonstrate Large Energy User status and locational suitability indirectly supports regional decarbonisation and air quality protection. By ensuring that only developments with a verified operational need for direct proximity to renewable generation, energy storage, and the 400kV transmission node are permitted at Woodlands, the objective reduces electrical transmission losses, maximises the absorption of curtailed renewable electricity, and prevents uncoordinated industrial emissions elsewhere in the county.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the Climate Action Plan, EirGrid grid connection strategies, and the co-location objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 1–2), requiring evidence of locational suitability ensures that permitted developments genuinely benefit from co-location with adjacent renewable generation, energy storage, and the 400kV substation, supporting cumulative regional decarbonisation.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	M	L	R	P/R	Minor Positive	Requiring planning applicants to demonstrate Large Energy User status and locational suitability protects and optimises strategic high-voltage electricity transmission and interconnector capacity at Woodlands. By screening out non-essential or speculative proposals, the objective prevents grid congestion and ensures scarce utility infrastructure is reserved for developments with a verified operational need for direct proximity to the 400kV node.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in conjunction with national grid reinforcement programmes and the detailed development management criteria of Draft Variation No. 6, mandatory supporting statements ensure that multiple phased applications at Woodlands align with available electricity transmission and interconnector capacity, preventing cumulative grid congestion and optimising strategic infrastructure use.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Policy	EP OBJ 4: To provide a dedicated direct access point from the Green Energy Park at Woodlands to the R154 to ensure seamless, safe and efficient transportation logistics for construction and operational phases.																
	SA Effects								Cumulative Effects				Mitigation				
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects		Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects	
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	D	L	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	Constructing a dedicated access junction onto the R154 regional road introduces localised removal of roadside hedgerows, treelines, and verge habitats, alongside temporary construction-phase disturbance to local fauna.		Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Constructing the dedicated R154 access junction alongside wider site clearance across the Woodlands Green Energy Park and adjacent permitted energy projects (such as battery storage and synchronous condenser developments) creates incremental cumulative hedgerow and habitat loss.	No	Natural Heritage policies (HER POL 27–41 and HER OBJ 30–40) require Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening/NIS, protect Natura 2000 and national designated sites, and safeguard protected species, wetlands (HER POL 48), and ecological corridors, supported by INF OBJ 38 (riparian buffers).	Policy LEU 1 embeds overarching plan-level environmental standards, Objective LEU OBJ 3f safeguards ecological flows and water-dependent habitats/species, and Objective LEU OBJ 3i controls noise, vibration, lighting, air emissions (nitrogen deposition), fuel storage, and discharges individually and cumulatively (including during generator testing).	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Routing construction and operational heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements directly onto the R154 regional road network prevents industrial traffic from using narrow local rural roads, thereby protecting residential amenity, road safety, and pedestrian/cyclist environments within surrounding local communities.		Intra Cumulative	Positive	Operating in conjunction with the wider Green Energy Park objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 2–3 and LEU OBJ 1–2) and local transport safety policies, channelling all construction and operational logistics directly onto the R154 produces a positive cumulative effect on community safety and residential amenity by preventing heavy traffic infiltration onto local rural lanes across multiple phased developments.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Routing construction and operational heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements directly onto the R154 regional road network prevents industrial traffic from using narrow local rural roads, thereby improving road safety, and pedestrian/cyclist environments.		Intra Cumulative	Positive	Operating in conjunction with the wider Green Energy Park objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 2–3 and LEU OBJ 1–2) and local transport safety policies, channelling all construction and operational logistics directly onto the R154 produces a positive cumulative effect on community safety by preventing heavy traffic infiltration onto local rural lanes across multiple phased developments.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	L	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The development of dedicated access is anticipated to result in the permanent loss of a localised strip of agricultural land along the R154 to accommodate the access road.		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Geological Heritage policies (HER POL 44–46, HER OBJ 44–45, Appendix 11) and Chapter 6 policies (INF POL 19–25) protect County Geological Sites and vulnerable aquifers, while DM OBJ 5 and Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) govern topsoil management and contamination prevention.	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	N/A	
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	L	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	There is potential that the development of the dedicated access may result in additional surface runoff associated with highway drainage, which may result in negative effects upon nearby water quality.		Intra Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative increases in surface water runoff arising from multiple developments within the same surface water catchment could reduce water quality. The implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) attenuation, water-efficient or closed-loop cooling technologies, and floodplain avoidance under the Variation and parent County Development Plan could result in positive cumulative effects if implemented across multiple developments.	No	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3d mandates proven water/wastewater capacity prior to operation, Objective LEU OBJ 3e requires water-efficient cooling (recirculation, rainwater/reclaimed water), Objective LEU OBJ 3f restricts routine potable-water cooling and prevents waterbody status deterioration, and Objective LEU OBJ 3j mandates water monitoring.	Minor Negative	Minor Positive	
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	D	M	L	R	P/I	Minor Positive	Developing a junction to the site is anticipated to enhance strategic transport connectivity, protecting the structural integrity of surrounding local roads from heavy construction and operational loads. This has potential to aid in reducing additional traffic during construction and operation and therefore minimise air pollution.		Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating in tandem with national and regional road network management policies and the phased build-out of the Green Energy Park, consolidating site access onto a single engineered R154 junction protects the structural condition and capacity of the surrounding local road network, generating a positive cumulative effect on air quality.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	M	L	R	P/I	Minor Positive	Developing a junction to the site is anticipated to enhance strategic transport connectivity. This has potential to aid in reducing additional traffic during construction and operation and therefore minimise noise pollution associated with transport to and from the site.		Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating in tandem with national and regional road network management policies and the phased build-out of the Green Energy Park, consolidating site access onto a single engineered R154 junction protects the structural condition and capacity of the surrounding local road network, generating a positive cumulative effect on noise pollution.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.		Intra Cumulative	Positive	Working alongside the low-carbon energy cluster objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 and regional transport efficiency goals, a single direct R154 access point streamlines logistics across phased construction and operational activities, minimising cumulative vehicle mileage and congestion-related emissions on the local road network.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	D	M	L	R	P/I	Minor Positive	Enhances strategic transport connectivity and road safety by delivering a purpose-built, high-capacity junction directly onto the R154 regional road, protecting the structural integrity of surrounding local roads from heavy construction and operational loads.		Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating in tandem with national and regional road network management policies and the phased build-out of the Green Energy Park, consolidating site access onto a single engineered R154 junction protects the structural condition and capacity of the surrounding local road network, generating a positive cumulative effect on transport infrastructure.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive	
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	L	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The introduction of a new engineered road junction into a rural roadside frontage is anticipated to result in localised visual change.		Intra Cumulative	Uncertain	The engineered R154 junction combine with internal Green Energy Park buildings, the existing 400kV substation, and adjacent energy installations to create incremental cumulative visual change along the R154 corridor.	No	Landscape Character Assessment policies (HER POL 49–52, HER OBJ 45–50, Appendix 5 LCA, Appendix 10 Protected Views) and Chapter 11 Development Management Standards (DM POL 2) mandate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), sympathetic siting/massing, native screen planting, and dark-sky lighting controls. Also LEU OBJ 2.	N/A	Minor Negative	Minor Negative	

Policy	EP OBJ 5: To allow for agricultural uses such as vertical farms that are complementary to the development of the lands identified for a Green Energy Park at Woodlands.															
	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation				
SEA objective	Direct / Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Permitting complementary vertical agricultural uses strengthens local food supply resilience and diversifies agricultural employment opportunities for communities in County Meath.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with the wider economic and energy security framework of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 2–4 and LEU OBJ 1–2) alongside national agri-food resilience strategies, co-located vertical farming broadens local employment opportunities and strengthens regional food supply security without introducing cumulative noise, air emissions, or heavy traffic nuisances for nearby communities.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Enabling high-density, multi-tier agricultural production within a compact built footprint on zoned Green Energy Park lands delivers a minor positive effect on sustainable land use. Concentrating intensive food production within an established utility hub maximises output per hectare, prevents agricultural topsoil erosion, and relieves development pressure on prime greenfield agricultural soils across the wider region.	Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting synergistically with national compact growth and sustainable land-management policies within the National Planning Framework (NPF), co-locating vertical agriculture within the Woodlands Green Energy Park maximises agricultural output per unit of land and reduces cumulative conversion pressure on prime greenfield agricultural soils across County Meath.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	M	L	R	P/R	Minor Positive	Co-locating vertical farms directly alongside Large Energy Users, renewable energy generation, and battery storage facilitates circular-economy energy exchanges, enabling agricultural facilities to utilise recovered low-grade waste heat and low-carbon electricity. Furthermore, localising year-round fresh produce supply chains reduces long-haul freight transport distances and associated greenhouse gas emissions.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the low-carbon energy cluster objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 2) and national Climate Action Plan decarbonisation targets, circular waste-heat recovery and renewable electricity integration between Large Energy Users and vertical farms generate a positive cumulative reduction in operational carbon intensity and food-transport emissions.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	M	L	R	P/R	Minor Positive	Integrating complementary agricultural operations into the Woodlands Green Energy Park enhances circular resource efficiency and optimises the performance of strategic site infrastructure. This also provides opportunities to develop infrastructure to support Meath's growing population.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	The development of vertical farms and infrastructure for future generations, alongside development within the CDP and surrounding schemes is anticipated to result in increases in infrastructure across the County and surrounding area to support future populations.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Uncertain	There is potential for alterations to local landscape character and visual amenity from the implementation of vertical farming. However, effects are likely to be determined by individual scheme design.	Intra Cumulative	Uncertain	The implementation of vertical farming, alongside internal Green Energy Park buildings, the existing 400kV substation, and adjacent energy installations to create incremental cumulative visual change around the site.	No	Landscape Character Assessment policies (HER POL 49–52, HER OBJ 46–50, Appendix 5 LCA, Appendix 10 Protected Views) and Chapter 11 Development Management Standards (DM POL 2) mandate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs), sympathetic siting/massing, native screen planting, and dark-sky lighting controls. Also LEU OBJ 2.	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive

Policy	EP OBJ 6: To require that development on the TU zoned lands at Woodland Energy Park is informed by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, including hydraulic modelling of all watercourses within the lands, and applies the sequential approach such that: 1. highly vulnerable development, including substations, generation plant, energy storage and large energy user buildings, is located in Flood Zone C; 2. a riparian setback of not less than 30metres from top of bank is maintained either side of all watercourses, in accordance with INF OBJ 38 of this Plan, free of development other than water-compatible uses and essential crossings; 3. less vulnerable elements, such as solar arrays, are only located in Flood Zones A or B where flood depths are shallow and there is no loss of floodplain storage or conveyance; and 4. surface water is managed through SuDs to greenfield runoff rates. Any new or altered watercourse crossing would also require consent from the OPW.														
	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	D	H	L	L	P/I	Significant Positive	The requirement to maintain a minimum 30-metre undeveloped riparian buffer either side of all watercourses, in accordance with INF OBJ 38, directly protects aquatic habitats, bankside flora, and riparian ecological corridors throughout the Woodland Energy Park landbank. By prohibiting built encroachment within riparian margins and restricting runoff rates via Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), the objective prevents water quality degradation within receiving watercourses. Collectively, these measures safeguard ecological connectivity and support protected aquatic and terrestrial species reliant on riparian corridors, resulting in a significant positive long-term effect on biodiversity.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating synergistically with INF OBJ 38 of the parent County Development Plan, Water Framework Directive (WFD) river basin management objectives, and the ecological landscaping requirements of Draft Variation No. 6, the mandatory retention of 30-metre riparian buffer zones and greenfield runoff rate SuDS attenuation secures uninterrupted aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity across the wider catchment. Collectively, these measures prevent incremental riparian encroachment across phased developments, generating a significant positive cumulative effect on biodiversity.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Confining built development footprints and highly vulnerable infrastructure to Flood Zone C, while maintaining undeveloped 30-metre riparian setbacks and natural floodplain storage across Flood Zones A and B, prevents soil degredation. Preserving natural floodplain soils supports ongoing groundwater infiltration, nutrient retention, and terrestrial carbon storage across the Woodland landbank, resulting in a minor positive effect on soil and land-use sustainability.	Intra Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the zoning and compact development provisions of Draft Variation No. 6, the preservation of 30-metre riparian corridors and natural floodplain areas across Flood Zones A and B moderates cumulative soil degredation across the Woodland landbank and protects sensitive alluvial soils from cumulative compaction and structural degradation, resulting in a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	H	L	L	P/I	Significant Positive	The implementation of site-specific hydraulic modelling, the retention of 30-metre riparian buffer zones, the preservation of floodplain storage and conveyance within Flood Zones A and B, and the attenuation of surface water discharges to greenfield runoff rates through SuDS provide comprehensive protection for local hydrological regimes, hydromorphology, and water quality. In addition, requiring formal consent from the Office of Public Works (OPW) for any new or altered watercourse crossings ensures that channel capacity is maintained and downstream flood risk is not exacerbated, resulting in a significant positive effect under Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting positively with parent County Development Plan hydrological policies, WFD river basin objectives, and OPW Section 50 watercourse consent controls, EP OBJ 6 effectively neutralises potential cumulative surface water runoff and floodplain displacement impacts arising from the phased build-out of the Woodland Energy Park alongside adjacent energy developments (including the existing 400kV substation and permitted battery storage facilities). By maintaining floodplain conveyance and greenfield discharge rates across all plots, the objective delivers a significant positive cumulative effect on catchment flood resilience and water quality.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Significant Positive	Integrating site-specific hydraulic modelling, sequential flood-zone avoidance, and greenfield runoff rate SuDS into the spatial layout of the Woodland Energy Park directly embeds long-term climate change adaptation and flood resilience into project design. Safeguarding critical low-carbon generation, storage, and grid assets against extreme rainfall and fluvial flood events ensures continuity of operation under future climate projections, delivering a significant positive effect on climatic resilience.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with the National Adaptation Framework, the Climate Action Plan, and the low-carbon energy cluster objectives of Draft Variation No. 6, embedding site-specific hydraulic modelling and sequential flood-zone protection across all phased developments enhances cumulative climate adaptation and operational resilience for critical regional energy infrastructure.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	D	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	Requiring highly vulnerable strategic assets—specifically substations, power generation plant, energy storage installations, and Large Energy User buildings—to be sited exclusively within Flood Zone C directly protects critical regional electricity and industrial infrastructure from flood damage and service disruption. Ensuring zero net loss of floodplain storage or conveyance and regulating watercourse crossings via OPW consent further safeguards downstream transport and utility infrastructure, generating a significant positive effect on material assets.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating synergistically with EP OBJ 1, EP OBJ 2, and national electricity transmission resilience programmes, confining all highly vulnerable substations, generation plants, energy storage systems, and Large Energy User buildings to Flood Zone C ensures that the entire clustered energy and industrial hub remains protected against fluvial and pluvial flood disruption, generating a significant positive cumulative effect on strategic material assets.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Mandating undeveloped 30-metre vegetated riparian corridors along all watercourses while confining larger built structures to Flood Zone C introduces natural blue-green spatial breaks across the Woodland Energy Park landbank. This spatial separation softens the visual massing of built infrastructure and preserves established riparian landscape features within the receiving rural setting, resulting in a minor positive effect on landscape character.	Intra Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the boundary planting, massing, and design controls of Draft Variation No. 6, the preservation of continuous 30-metre vegetated riparian corridors across the Woodland landbank provides structural green-infrastructure relief that softens the cumulative visual presence of the Green Energy Park and adjacent utility infrastructure within the wider rural landscape, resulting in a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive

Policy	LEU OBJ 1: Require all planning applications for large energy users to be accompanied by a Development Statement addressing: * Anticipated electrical and gas demand profile (peak MW, annual MWh). * Grid operator engagement and confirmation of capacity solution. * Renewable energy procurement and decarbonisation pathway. * Efficiency plans. * Heat-reuse feasibility and identified off-takers. * Water demand and cooling technology specification. * Connectivity (fibre and network resilience). * Environmental, transport, and biodiversity assessments. * Site specific flood risk assessment and surface water management strategy. Decommissioning and community benefit commitments.

	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Requiring comprehensive environmental and biodiversity assessments within the mandatory Development Statement ensures that potential ecological constraints, protected habitats, and species pathways are rigorously evaluated prior to project authorisation. By embedding early ecological screening into project design, the objective prevents uncoordinated habitat fragmentation and secures mitigation compliance across the Woodland Energy Park.	Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating in conjunction with the ecological protection objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 and the parent County Development Plan, mandatory environmental and biodiversity assessments for every Large Energy User ensure consistent, cumulative oversight of ecological constraints, preventing uncoordinated habitat loss across the Woodlands landbank.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Mandating detailed reporting on environmental assessments, traffic and transport strategies, flood risk management, and community benefit commitments ensures that the socio-economic and amenity impacts of Large Energy Users are thoroughly controlled. This proactive framework protects surrounding residential communities from industrial nuisance, traffic congestion, and uncoordinated development pressures.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working synergistically with regional planning standards and community benefit policies, comprehensive Development Statements ensure that cumulative traffic, environmental, and socio-economic impacts from multiple co-located industrial facilities are evaluated and managed holistically, safeguarding regional population health and amenity.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	The development of a framework will help to protect surrounding residential communities from industrial nuisance, traffic congestion, and uncoordinated development pressures. This will help to support th health and wellbeing of surrounding communities.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	I	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Enforcing rigorous project-level evaluations through a standardised Development Statement ensures that land-take, soil sealing, and construction earthworks associated with Large Energy User facilities are optimised and minimised. This administrative gatekeeping prevents speculative or land-inefficient proposals, promoting compact, sustainable land utilisation within the zoned energy park.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside national compact growth policies and local zoning provisions, systematic Development Statement evaluations prevent cumulative land-speculation and inefficient greenfield conversion, reinforcing sustainable, high-density land-use clustering at the Woodlands energy hub.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	I	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Requiring explicit specifications regarding water demand, cooling technology, and site-specific flood risk assessments with surface water management strategies directly supports Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives. By scrutinising water abstraction, thermal discharge parameters, and sustainable drainage solutions at the planning application stage, the objective prevents adverse hydrological alterations and water quality degradation.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting positively with catchment-wide Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives and site-specific flood risk policies, cumulative water demand, cooling discharges, and surface water management strategies across multiple Large Energy Users are rigorously coordinated and controlled through mandatory planning documentation.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Requiring applicants to set out anticipated energy demand, renewable energy procurement arrangements, decarbonisation pathways and efficiency measures encourages the use of lower-carbon and more energy-efficient technologies. The requirement for environmental assessments and consideration of cooling technologies may also help identify and reduce potential sources of emissions. While individual developments may generate temporary emissions during construction, the policy promotes early consideration of environmental effects and mitigation measures, helping to minimise adverse impacts on local air quality and supporting longer-term reductions in emissions associated with energy use.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Development associated with large energy users may generate temporary construction noise and, in some cases, operational noise from plant, cooling systems, substations, generators or other infrastructure. However, the requirement for environmental assessments provides a mechanism for identifying potential noise impacts and implementing appropriate mitigation measures through design, layout and operational controls. As a result, the policy is expected to reduce the likelihood of	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	The mandatory inclusion of anticipated electrical and gas demand profiles, grid capacity confirmations, renewable energy procurement pathways, efficiency plans, and heat-reuse feasibility analyses directly drives low-carbon integration and climate action. By requiring incoming industries to demonstrate decarbonisation pathways and circular heat-offtaking, the objective maximises energy efficiency and accelerates	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with national Climate Action Plan targets and EirGrid decarbonisation strategies, mandating renewable energy procurement pathways, efficiency plans, and heat-reuse off-taking across all incoming Large Energy Users generates a significant positive cumulative effect by	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	Requiring formal confirmation of grid operator engagement, capacity solutions, connectivity resilience, and utility infrastructure specifications ensures that incoming Large Energy Users align precisely with available national electrical transmission, interconnector, and digital network capacities. This prevents regional grid overload and optimises the operational efficiency of critical material assets at Woodlands.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating synergistically with EP OBJ 1–2 and national transmission capacity frameworks, requiring formal grid operator engagement confirmation and utility specifications for every Large Energy User ensures that cumulative electricity and digital demands match infrastructure capacity, preventing network congestion.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Policy	LEU OBJ 2: Applications for large energy users should include a supporting statement to include the following: · Demonstrates how the development constitutes a large energy user; · Demonstrate availability of firm power capacity or delivery of new capacity without adverse impact on the grid; · Demonstrate a clear energy strategy that priorities proximate low-carbon sources, private-wire renewable generation, and/or storage in line with Government policies; · Details measures to maximise renewable energy use, reduce lost energy from this recourse and potentially reduce redispatch costs on the grid; · Details efficient water use, with preference for public water supply and for low-water or closed-loop cooling technologies; · Illustrates compatibility with gas or alternative fuels infrastructure, with preference for dual-fuel or low-carbon readiness; · Demonstrates adequate digital connectivity and network resilience; · Details design solutions that mitigate environmental, landscape, biodiversity, noise and traffic impacts; · Details for decommissioning and site restoration plan, and where feasible, provision for adaptive reuse. · Identifies community benefit measures, including local employment, skills or energy and recreational initiatives that align with the local community's needs.

	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Requiring planning applications to incorporate dedicated design solutions that mitigate biodiversity impacts—alongside comprehensive decommissioning and site restoration plans—ensures that ecological protection and long-term habitat recovery are embedded from project inception. By screening out non-essential proposals that fail to demonstrate Large Energy User status, the objective also prevents unnecessary habitat fragmentation across the Woodlands landbank.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating synergistically with the ecological corridor, riparian buffer, and landscaping objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (including EP OBJ 6) and the parent County Development Plan, requiring project-level biodiversity design mitigation and end-of-life site restoration across all Large Energy User applications prevents incremental habitat degradation and secures long-term ecological recovery across the Woodlands landbank, resulting in a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Significant Positive	Mandating explicit design mitigation for noise and traffic impacts alongside tangible community benefit commitments—specifically local employment, skills training, energy initiatives, and recreational amenities aligned with local needs—directly protects residential amenity while delivering long-term socio-economic enhancements for surrounding communities.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with the dedicated R154 regional road access (EP OBJ 4), development statement requirements (LEU OBJ 1), and regional socio-economic policies, mandating coordinated noise and traffic mitigation alongside tailored community benefit programmes ensures that cumulative amenity pressures are controlled while generating sustained, positive cumulative employment and recreational benefits for local communities.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Mandating explicit design mitigation for noise and traffic impacts alongside tangible community benefit commitments, will help to contribute to improving health and wellbeing of surrounding communities.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	T/R	Minor Positive	Restricting site occupancy to verified Large Energy Users prevents speculative land-take, while the mandatory inclusion of decommissioning, site restoration, and adaptive reuse provisions guarantees long-term land-use reversibility and soil recovery at the end of operational life.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the locational gatekeeping criteria of EP OBJ 3 and national compact growth policies within the National Planning Framework (NPF), ensuring that every facility incorporates adaptive reuse and site restoration commitments moderates cumulative permanent soil sealing and preserves long-term land-use flexibility across County Meath, resulting in a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Requiring detailed water efficiency strategies that prioritise public water supply alongside low-water or closed-loop cooling technologies substantially reduces freshwater abstraction pressure and thermal discharge risks. Collectively, these binding operational standards safeguard local surface water and groundwater bodies in alignment with Water Framework Directive (WFD) quality objectives.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting positively with site-wide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) controls (EP OBJ 6) and catchment-wide Water Framework Directive (WFD) river basin management objectives, requiring all co-located Large Energy Users to adopt low-water or closed-loop cooling technologies and rely on public water supply prevents cumulative abstraction stress and thermal discharge impacts across local watercourses, yielding a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Significant Positive
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Requirements for large energy users to prioritise proximate low-carbon energy sources, private-wire renewable generation, energy storage and efficient energy use are expected to reduce reliance on fossil fuel-based energy generation and associated emissions over the longer term. In addition, requirements to demonstrate efficient water use and minimise energy losses support broader environmental sustainability objectives. While individual developments may result in temporary increases in emissions during construction, the policy requires applicants to identify and mitigate environmental impacts, helping to minimise adverse effects on local air quality.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Mixed	Requiring an energy strategy that prioritises proximate low-carbon sources, private-wire renewable generation, energy storage, curtailment reduction, and dual-fuel or low-carbon alternative fuel readiness directly accelerates operational decarbonisation. Maximising renewable energy absorption and reducing grid redispatch losses delivers a significant positive long-term effect on regional greenhouse gas emissions and air quality. However, the development of large energy user infrastructure permits the use of fossil fuel energy within development, which may have a negative effect upon climate resilience if fossil fuel energy is used within developments.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Working in concert with the low-carbon energy cluster objectives of Draft Variation No. 6 (EP OBJ 1–2), the Climate Action Plan, and EirGrid decarbonisation strategies, mandating private-wire renewable integration, energy storage, redispatch reduction, and low-carbon fuel readiness across all Large Energy Users generates a positive cumulative effect by maximising renewable energy absorption and driving regional greenhouse gas reductions. However, if fossil fuel energy is utilised by Large Energy Users, in combination with other developments both within and outside of the CDP, there is potential for a cumulative increase in greenhouse gas emissions.	Yes	N/A	LEU OBJ 3c: To require compliance with applicable electricity connection requirements while promoting measures, where feasible and consistent with grid operator requirements, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and improve alignment with renewable generation, including appropriate storage and demand flexibility.	Uncertain	Uncertain
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	Mandating proof of firm power capacity—or the delivery of new capacity without adverse grid impact—alongside measures to reduce grid redispatch costs, ensure digital network resilience, and facilitate adaptive reuse directly safeguards and optimises strategic national electricity, gas, and communications infrastructure.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating synergistically with EP OBJ 1–2, LEU OBJ 1, and national grid reinforcement programmes, requiring each Large Energy User to demonstrate firm capacity without adverse grid impact, reduce redispatch costs, and secure resilient digital connectivity prevents cumulative network congestion and optimises strategic transmission and utility infrastructure capacity, delivering a significant positive cumulative effect.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Explicitly requiring project-level design solutions that mitigate landscape and visual impacts, reinforced by end-of-life decommissioning and site restoration commitments, ensures that large-scale industrial structures are sensitively integrated into the receiving rural setting and that visual alterations remain reversible over the long term.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Operating alongside the boundary planting, riparian setback, and massing controls of Draft Variation No. 6, requiring project-specific landscape design mitigation and end-of-life restoration across all Large Energy User facilities moderates cumulative visual consolidation within the rural setting and secures long-term visual reversibility, generating a positive, non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Positive

Site Name	Woodland 400kV Transmission Substation
Site Description	A major crossing point of high voltage power lines in Meath. South of Dunshaughlin the area has the Woodland 400kV transmission substation. The Portan DC Converter station where the EWIC interconnector from the UK connects to the Irish electricity power station is also located in the area. This interconnector reduces power to 220kV and these power lines head east towards Dublin. The high-pressure gas network is also within 5km of the Woodland substation.

SA objective	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	Siting large-scale energy infrastructure or Large Energy Users (LEUs) in this rural northeastern sector presents potential indirect habitat disturbance and ecological fragmentation risks. However, the site scores well regarding EU Habitats Directive criteria (scoring 5 for being located over 15km away from Natura 2000 sites with no direct hydrological connection), ensuring that ecological impacts can be mitigated through standard project-level assessments.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Operating in conjunction with regional transmission reinforcement and industrial activity, development presents manageable ecological pathways. Mandatory Appropriate Assessment and county biodiversity policies ensure cumulative impacts remain non-significant.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	M	L	P/R	Minor Positive	No significant or minor effects The development of the energy park has the potential to result in employment opportunities (both at construction and operation).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working alongside regional economic development and energy security strategies, co-locating energy consumers near high-generation nodes supports local employment. However, cumulative transport and infrastructure deficits in the northeast corridor mean socio-economic benefits are tempered by distance from major urban centres.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	H	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The 400KV transmission substation area involves agricultural land-take and soil sealing, yielding a low suitability score for compact land-use integration.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Incremental industrial and utility development contributes to cumulative greenfield land-take and soil sealing.	Yes	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Positive	Water infrastructure is accessible at this location, with water mains available directly at the site (scoring 3) and wastewater infrastructure located within 2.5km (scoring 3). Additionally, the site is identified as having low groundwater vulnerability, meaning there is a low risk from construction works to result in contamination.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative water demand from industrial or agricultural-energy uses in the catchment is supported by local water mains availability. However, due to the absence of local wastewater infrastructure, cumulative discharges must be strictly regulated under Water Framework Directive river basin management plans to prevent cumulative catchment stress.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mixed	The development of the energy park at Woodland has the potential to increase air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, primarily from construction traffic, plant and machinery. However, these effects are expected to be temporary and localised. In the longer term, the generation of renewable energy will support the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon energy system, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributing to improvements in air quality and wider climate change objectives.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of the energy park at Woodlands has the potential to increase noise levels during the construction phase as a result of site clearance, earthworks, construction traffic and the use of plant and machinery. These effects are expected to be temporary and largely confined to the construction period. Once operational, the scheme may generate low levels of noise associated with renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment; however, these effects are anticipated to be limited and can typically be controlled through design and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	Woodlands handles the highest power output at 400kV. Locating energy-intensive users or storage proximate to Woodlands provides a major strategic climate benefit by absorbing excess regional renewable generation, reducing curtailment, and supporting national decarbonisation targets.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting synergistically with national Climate Action Plan targets and regional grid constraints, Woodlands provides the highest potential for power connection. Facilitating energy parks or flexible demand here generates a positive cumulative effect on regional carbon reduction and renewable energy integration.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	M	L	R	P/I	Minor Positive	From an electrical power perspective, the site is served by the 400kV power network (scoring 5) and benefits from local lost energy availability <10km (scoring 3). However, material asset performance is constrained by poor transport connectivity—regional roads are located >5km away (scoring 3), there are also sustainable transport options within <1km (scoring 3), and private car commuting times to Dublin Airport ate between 15 and 30 minutes (scoring 5). Furthermore, there is the highest availability of fibre connectivity amongst assessed sites (scoring 5).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	The 400kV substation provides a localized electrical node, and the availability of regional access, public transport, and high-speed digital fibre infrastructure are likely to benefit the surrounding area and communities if delivered alongside CDP policies and other plans and projects, providing support for complex digital or multi-utility LEU clusters without substantial public infrastructure investment.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Minor Positive	Significant Positive
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Site Name	Meath Hill
Site Description	Meath hill is located to the northeast of the county. There is a significant heat load in the area. Larger windfarms are planning to connect to this location so it will have high potential for green energy. Kingscourt in Cavan is the largest urban area relative to the substation.

SEA objective	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	Siting large-scale energy infrastructure or Large Energy Users (LEUs) in this rural northeastern sector presents potential indirect habitat disturbance and ecological fragmentation risks. This is compounded by the site's close proximity to Natura 2000 sites (scoring 5 for being located over 15km away with no direct hydrological connection, though requiring localised screening). Appropriate Assessment (AA) and project-level ecological mitigation will be essential to protect local flora and fauna.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Operating in conjunction with planned regional wind farm connections and wider county renewable roll-out, the Meath Hill area experiences high renewable energy clustering. While this aligns with decarbonisation, simultaneous grid connection works and infrastructure build-out create potential cumulative habitat disturbance pathways. These are managed through mandatory Appropriate Assessment and county ecological policies, resulting in a non-significant cumulative effect.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	M	L	P/R	Minor Positive	No significant or minor effects The development of the energy park has the potential to result in employment opportunities (both at construction and operation).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working alongside regional economic development and energy security strategies, co-locating energy consumers near high-generation nodes supports local employment. However, cumulative transport and infrastructure deficits in the northeast corridor mean socio-economic benefits are tempered by distance from major urban centres.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The Meath Hill site is classified under the County Development Plan as having Low Potential Capacity in terms of Landscape Capacity (scoring 0), indicating a low ability of the local landform to absorb large-scale industrial or energy park development without significant land-use alteration and greenfield soil sealing.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Incremental industrial and energy infrastructure development at Meath Hill contributes to cumulative greenfield land-take and soil sealing in a peripheral rural zone. Because the area possesses Low Potential Capacity for large-scale development, uncoordinated clustering risks compounding landscape and land-use pressures outside designated growth corridors.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	Water infrastructure is highly accessible at this location, with water mains available directly at the site (scoring 5). However, wastewater infrastructure is absent locally, with mains wastewater located more than 2.5km away (scoring 0). Consequently, industrial or LEU developments would require independent wastewater management solutions or network extensions, and standard Water Framework Directive (WFD) protections must be enforced to prevent local hydrological impacts. Additionally, The site is identified as having moderate groundwater vulnerability, meaning there is potential risk from construction works to result in contamination.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative water demand from industrial or agricultural-energy uses in the Meath Hill catchment is supported by local water mains availability. However, due to the absence of local wastewater infrastructure, cumulative discharges must be strictly regulated under Water Framework Directive river basin management plans to prevent cumulative catchment stress.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mixed	The development of the energy park at Meath Hill has the potential to increase air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, primarily from construction traffic, plant and machinery. However, these effects are expected to be temporary and localised. In the longer term, the generation of renewable energy will support the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon energy system, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributing to improvements in air quality and wider climate change objectives.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of the energy park at Meath Hill has the potential to increase noise levels during the construction phase as a result of site clearance, earthworks, construction traffic and the use of plant and machinery. These effects are expected to be temporary and largely confined to the construction period. Once operational, the scheme may generate low levels of noise associated with renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment; however, these effects are anticipated to be limited and can typically be controlled through design and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	I	H	L	R	P/I	Significant Positive	Meath Hill handles the greatest volume of wind energy generation in the county, with substantial lost energy / total dispatch down (22.15 GWh total across its associated sub-nodes, including 6.10 GWh oversupply and 11.65 GWh constraints). Locating energy-intensive users or storage proximate to Meath Hill provides a major strategic climate benefit by absorbing excess regional renewable generation, reducing curtailment, and supporting national decarbonisation targets.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting synergistically with national Climate Action Plan targets and regional grid constraints, Meath Hill captures significant volumes of local wind generation and dispatch-down energy (22.15 GWh). Facilitating energy parks or flexible demand here generates a positive cumulative effect on regional carbon reduction and renewable energy integration.	Yes	N/A	N/A	Significant Positive	Significant Positive
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	M	L	R	P/I	Mixed	From an electrical power perspective, the site is served by the 110kV power network (scoring 3) and benefits from local lost energy availability <10km (scoring 3). However, material asset performance is constrained by poor transport connectivity—regional roads are located >5km away (scoring 3), there are no sustainable transport options within 5km (scoring 0), and private car commuting times to Dublin Airport exceed 60 minutes (scoring 0). Furthermore, fibre connectivity is severely limited, scoring the lowest among assessed sites (scoring 1).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	While the 110kV substation provides a localized electrical node, cumulative deficiencies in regional road access, public transport, and high-speed digital fibre infrastructure (scoring 1) place Meath Hill at a cumulative disadvantage compared to primary central corridors like Woodlands, restricting its capacity to support complex digital or multi-utility LEU clusters without substantial public infrastructure investment.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative development within the Meath Hill 100-hectare study zone presents minimal risk to recorded archaeological monuments due to the very low baseline monument density, ensuring neutral cumulative heritage outcomes under standard development management safeguards.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	H	L	L	P/I	Significant Negative	Meath Hill performs poorly in landscape evaluations. While landscape sensitivity is rated as low-to-moderate (scoring 4) and landscape value is rated as moderate (scoring 4), the critical constraint is Landscape Capacity, which is formally designated as Low Potential Capacity (scoring 0). The site's peripheral location relative to primary Meath settlements, combined with its inability to visually integrate large-scale industrial structures, creates high vulnerability to adverse landscape character impacts.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	The combination of low landscape capacity (scoring 0), peripheral geographic siting, and potential utility infrastructure expansion creates an adverse cumulative visual impact. Introducing large-scale industrial structures into this sensitive rural setting risks incremental landscape degradation and erosion of local visual amenity.	Yes	INF OBJ 39 and INF POL 48 will help to minimise the impacts on the local landscape	N/A	Minor Negative	Minor Negative

Site Name	Kinnegad
Site Description	Even though Kinnegad is in Westmeath a critical 110kV substation is within Meath's boundary. The area also has a large heat load with large scale cement works in the area. The 220kV Shannonbridge to Maynooth line crosses the area. It also within 5km of gas network to support large energy users.

	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
SEA objective	Direct/ Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence/ Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	I	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	Although Kinnegad is situated in Westmeath, a critical 110kV substation lies within County Meath's boundary, crossing significant industrial heat load areas associated with large-scale cement manufacturing. Siting large-scale energy infrastructure or Large Energy Users (LEUs) here presents potential indirect habitat disturbance and ecological fragmentation risks. However, the site scores well regarding EU Habitats Directive criteria (scoring 5 for being located over 15km away from Natura 2000 sites with no direct hydrological connection), ensuring that ecological impacts can be mitigated through standard project-level assessments.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Operating in conjunction with regional transmission reinforcement and industrial activity in the border area with Westmeath, development at Kinnegad presents manageable ecological pathways. Mandatory Appropriate Assessment and county biodiversity policies ensure cumulative impacts remain non-significant.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	M	L	P/R	Minor Positive	No significant or minor effects The development of the energy park has the potential to result in employment opportunities (both at construction and operation).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working alongside regional industrial policies and heavy manufacturing clusters (such as cement works), co-locating energy users supports local employment, though distance from primary Meath urban centres tempers broader socio-economic integration.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	H	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The 110kV substation area involves agricultural land-take and soil sealing, yielding a low suitability score for compact land-use integration.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Incremental industrial and utility development at Kinnegad contributes to cumulative greenfield land-take and soil sealing.	Yes	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	M	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	Water and wastewater infrastructure present major constraints at Kinnegad. While water mains are located within 250 metres of the site (scoring 3), wastewater mains are located 3.6km away (scoring 0). Consequently, industrial developments would require significant network extensions or independent treatment facilities, and strict Water Framework Directive (WFD) protections must be applied to prevent local hydrological degradation. The site is identified as having moderate groundwater vulnerability, meaning there is potential risk from construction works to result in contamination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mixed	The development of the energy park at Kinnegad has the potential to increase air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, primarily from construction traffic, plant and machinery. However, these effects are expected to be temporary and localised. In the longer term, the generation of renewable energy will support the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon energy system, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributing to improvements in air quality and wider climate change objectives.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of the energy park at Kinnegad has the potential to increase noise levels during the construction phase as a result of site clearance, earthworks, construction traffic and the use of plant and machinery. These effects are expected to be temporary and largely confined to the construction period. Once operational, the scheme may generate low levels of noise associated with renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment; however, these effects are anticipated to be limited and can typically be controlled through design and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	D	H	L	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Kinnegad experiences significant lost energy / total dispatch down (63.78 GWh total across its associated sub-node, including 8.71 GWh oversupply, 3.09 GWh curtailment, and 51.99 GWh constraints). Locating energy-intensive demand or storage in the area helps absorb excess regional renewable generation and supports national decarbonisation objectives.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Interacting synergistically with national decarbonisation targets, Kinnegad captures high levels of regional lost energy and constraints (63.78 GWh). Facilitating flexible demand or energy storage here generates a positive cumulative effect on renewable energy absorption and grid stability.	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	I	M	L	R	P/R	Minor Positive	From a power perspective, the 220kV Shannonbridge to Maynooth line crosses the area and the 110kV substation is in place (scoring 5 for infrastructure existence). However, power connection scores lower (scoring 3). Meaning that there is potential for the site to use some existing infrastructure as part of the site development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Site Name	Gorman 220kV substation
Site Description	The Gorman 220kV substation is located northeast of Navan town and is a crossing point between the 220kV and 110kV networks. The gas line is within 10km of the substation but the capacity on this line is limited.

SA objective	SA Effects							Cumulative Effects				Mitigation			
	Direct / Indirect	Magnitude	Duration	Spatial Extent	Permanence / Reversibility	Significance	Description of potential effects	Type of Cumulative Effects	Negative/ Positive / Uncertain	Description of Effects	Significant?	Mitigation offered by other plan policies	Additional Mitigation Measures	Residual SA Effects	Residual Cumulative Effects
B_1: Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna) Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites and protected species.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	While the immediate area serves industrial operations such as Tara Mines, siting major energy infrastructure or Large Energy Users (LEUs) presents potential indirect habitat disturbance and ecological fragmentation risks. The site scores moderately regarding EU Habitats Directive criteria (scoring 3 for being located within 5km of a Natura 2000 site with potential hydrological connections), requiring rigorous project-level Appropriate Assessment (AA) and ecological mitigation.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Operating alongside regional grid upgrades and existing industrial facilities (such as Tara Mines), development at Gorman presents manageable ecological pathways. Because the site is within 5km of a Natura 2000 site, cumulative hydrological and habitat impacts must be strictly controlled through project-level Appropriate Assessment.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_1: Population Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options.	I	L	M	L	P/R	Minor Positive	Gorman serves established industrial operations, including Tara Mines, contributing to regional employment and economic stability. The development of the energy park has the potential to result in employment opportunities (both at construction and operation).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Positive	Working in tandem with regional economic policies and industrial employment hubs, co-locating energy users at Gorman supports regional economic activity, while low baseline housing density prevents acute cumulative residential nuisance pressures.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PHH_2: Human Health Protect human health and wellbeing.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SG_1: Soils and Geology Safeguard sensitive soil resources.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Minor Negative	The physical development of industrial facilities or an energy park at Gorman will likely results in permanent soil sealing and agricultural land conversion. However, the site has 'moderate landscape value' and has a number of existing grid assets.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Incremental industrial and utility development at Gorman contributes to cumulative greenfield land-take and soil sealing within a sensitive floodplain-adjacent setting, requiring careful cumulative land-use rationing.	Yes	N/A	Objective LEU OBJ 3g requires sustainable construction, responsible waste management, and structured decommissioning/site restoration to prevent legacy contamination or dereliction.	Minor Negative	Minor Negative
W_1: Water Quality Protect and where necessary improve and maintain water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	D	H	L	L	P/I	Significant Negative	Water availability at the site is a severe constraints at Gorman. While mains water is available directly at the site (scoring 5), wastewater infrastructure is entirely absent locally (>2.5km away, scoring 0). Furthermore, groundwater sensitivity is considered to be extreme, meaning there is potential risk from construction works to result in contamination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	INF POL 15 and INF OBJ 17 will works towards improving water quality and reducing contamination.	N/A	Minor Negative	N/A
AN_1: Air Quality Minimise emissions of pollutants to air associated with transport.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mixed	The development of the energy park at Gorman has the potential to increase air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase, primarily from construction traffic, plant and machinery. However, these effects are expected to be temporary and localised. In the longer term, the generation of renewable energy will support the transition to a cleaner, lower-carbon energy system, helping to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributing to improvements in air quality and wider climate change objectives.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AN_2: Noise Minimise noise emissions associated with traffic and transport.	D	L	L	L	P/I	Minor Negative	The development of the energy park at Gorman has the potential to increase noise levels during the construction phase as a result of site clearance, earthworks, construction traffic and the use of plant and machinery. These effects are expected to be temporary and largely confined to the construction period. Once operational, the scheme may generate low levels of noise associated with renewable energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment; however, these effects are anticipated to be limited and can typically be controlled through design and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CC_1: Climate Change Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting adaptation and mitigation measures.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Uncertain	Gorman captures regional lost energy / total dispatch down (8.63 GWh total across its associated sub-node, including 5.08 GWh oversupply, 1.80 GWh curtailment, and 1.75 GWh constraints). Locating flexible demand, storage, or co-located industrial users proximate to this 220/110kV hub assists in absorbing excess regional renewable generation and supporting climate action objectives. However, lands adjacent to the substation are designated within Flood Zone A (scoring 0 for flooding), posing a significant direct risk of fluvial and pluvial flooding	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Cumulative hydrological and flood risks are a primary concern; because adjacent lands are designated within Flood Zone A and local wastewater infrastructure is absent, uncoordinated industrial expansion risks compounding catchment-wide flood storage displacement and water quality stress unless strict WFD and sequential flood management are enforced.	Yes	INF POL 20 ensures that Flood Risk Assessments are carried out for any development proposal	N/A	Minor Positive	Minor Negative
MA_1: Material Assets Make best use of existing infrastructure and promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the county's and Meath's population.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mixed	From a power perspective, Gorman performs strongly as a 220kV and 110kV network crossroads (scoring 4 for power connection) with an operational substation in place (scoring 5). Road access is also favourable, with national roads located within 2.5km (scoring 5) and commuting times to Dublin Airport between 30 and 60 minutes (scoring 3). However, material asset performance is constrained by limited gas network capacity in the area, a lack of sustainable transport options (>5km away, scoring 0), and lower fibre connectivity (scoring 2).	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	While the 220kV/110kV substation crossroads and good national road access support material assets, cumulative limitations in local gas network capacity, absence of sustainable transport, and flood vulnerability restrict the site's overall capacity for expansive multi-utility Large Energy User parks.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH_1: Cultural Heritage Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and/or architectural heritage from impact as a result of development.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Neutral	No significant or minor effects.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Uncertain	Cumulative development within the 100-hectare study zone presents minimal risk to recorded archaeological monuments due to very low baseline monument density, ensuring neutral cumulative heritage outcomes under standard safeguards.	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LV_1: Landscape and Visual Protect and maintain the special qualities of the landscape character including coastal character within Meath.	D	M	L	L	P/R	Significant Negative	Landscape sensitivity is rated as moderate (scoring 3), landscape value is rated as high/very high (scoring 2), and landscape capacity is rated as moderate-to-high (scoring 4). While the physical landform has some capacity to absorb development, the introduction of large-scale industrial structures near sensitive river corridors and floodplains requires careful visual screening.	Intra & Inter Cumulative	Negative	Moderate landscape capacity helps absorb localised industrial structures, but cumulative visual consolidation near regional transport corridors requires coordinated boundary screening to prevent landscape degradation.	Yes	INF OBJ 39 and INF POL 48 will help to minimise the impacts on the local landscape	N/A	Minor Negative	Minor Negative

Appendix C Scoping Responses

Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath County Council

SLR Project No.: 425.069056.00001

20 November 2026

Revision Record

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Authorised By
1	18 November 2026	JR/CT	AT/JM	AT/AOB
2	20 November 2026	LJ	KH	KH
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			

Basis of Report

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Tables in Text

Table C-1: Scoping Consultation Comments 1

1.0 Scoping Consultation Comments

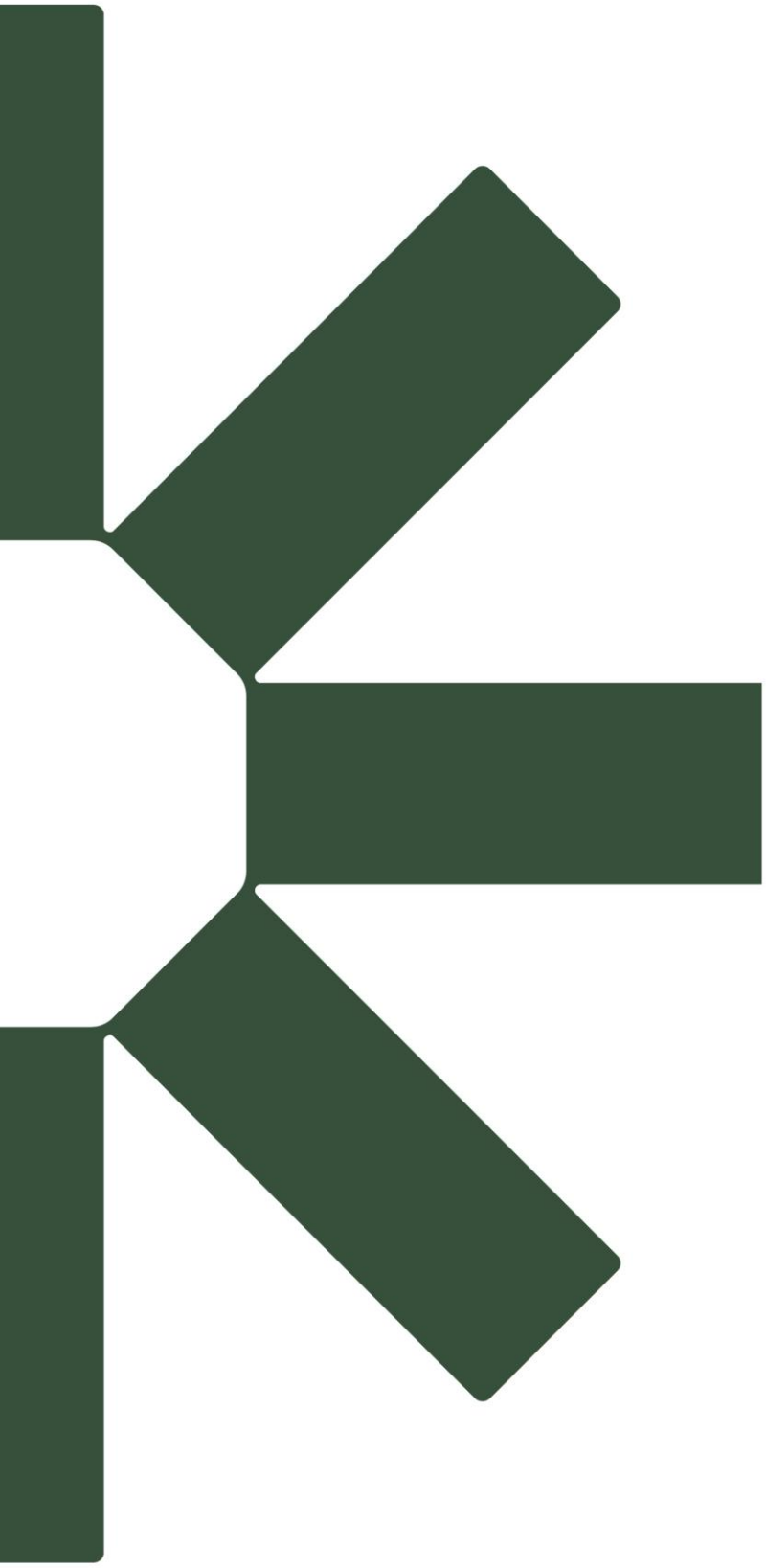
Table C-1 sets out the consultation comments received from the Environmental Authorities on the SEA Scoping. The table sets out how these comments were addressed.

Table C-1: Scoping Consultation Comments

ID	Consultee	Comment	Action Required?	In reference to	Response
1	Louth County Council	Louth County Council (LCC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the SEA Scoping for the Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2030 (as varied). LCC notes that a recent scoping letter referenced Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2030 (as varied). However, it is understood that this related to a different variation, which has since been renumbered. LCC further notes the SEA Scoping Letter dated 14th September 2026 and acknowledges that Meath County Council intends to prepare an SEA Environmental Report of the likely significant effects on the environment arising from the implementation of the proposed variation. LCC has no specific comments to make at this time.	No	Scoping	General comment - no action required.
2	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	**Nature Conservation** Concerning the SEA Scoping of Variation No. 6 to the Meath CDP 2021-2030 (as varied), it is noted the variation involves the inclusion of a list of substations in the CDP's Infrastructure Chapter, as well as the addition of a framework for safeguarding and expanding existing energy assets and a section on Green Energy Parks. The TU Transport and Utility Infrastructure zoning objective and guidance is in addition to be amended, and the TU zoning to be applied to a parcel of land of 103.42 ha, with a spot objective for the delivery of a Green Energy Park on these lands. The FI forwarded makes it clear that the plot of land rezoned for TU-Transport, Utility and Energy Infrastructure, to be the site of the 'Woodlands Energy Park', is near Batterstown and adjacent to the existing Woodlands Eirgrid electricity sub-station. SEA of the potential effects of proposed Variation no. 6 on fauna, flora and ecologically significant habitats should therefore largely focus on possible effects on protected species and ecologically valuable habitats within the footprint of the proposed Woodlands Energy Park and its zone of influence. The lands concerned are predominantly in the townlands of Creemore and Belshamstown and mainly at present in use for arable agriculture; they drain to a branch of the Tolka River which forms the boundary between these two townlands. The SEA to be undertaken should consider the potential effects of the development of the proposed Energy Park lands for the uses permitted under the new amended TU zoning, and include provision for the carrying out of properly targeted and seasonally appropriate surveys of any lands within the Energy Park, which are the subject of development proposals, for protected species of fauna and flora and ecologically significant habitats, and the adoption of measures to mitigate any adverse effects on these features identified as likely to result from the development proposed. The possible downstream effects on biota and habitats downstream on the Tolka River system should also be considered in the SEA, with parallel Appropriate Assessment taking account of any potential adverse effects on European sites, to which the Tolka system might form a viable hydrological pathway. The most ecologically valuable habitats on the proposed Energy Park site are probably the hedgerows/tree rows present there, particularly those along the Tolka River branch forming the boundary between Creemore and Belshamstown townlands and along the stream forming the townland boundary between the latter and Woodland's townland. It would be desirable if these townlands boundary hedgerows, and the riparian zones either side of the watercourses running parallel to them, could be preserved as far as possible within any development proposed for the Energy Park. Surveys of the Energy Park lands for otter and bat species, that are subject to a system of strict protection under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), should be undertaken ahead of any proposed development of these lands, and if any breeding or resting place of these species is identified (otter holt or couch, bat roosting site) in the course of these surveys, a derogation from the Habitats Directive obtained from the Department's National Parks and Wildlife	Yes	SEA Report Appropriate Assessment	The SEA will assess the potential effects of the Variation No.6 on biodiversity (including flora and fauna), specifically through SEO B_1, and upon the water environment (including the Tolka River) through the SEO W_1. Where potential significant effects are identified, the SEA will propose mitigation measures to minimise, reduce and avoid these effects. The detailed species surveys, site-specific mitigation measures and protected species licensing requirements identified by NPWS are matters for project-level assessment, when the nature, design and extent of future development proposals are known. Appropriate Assessment Response The AASR considers the potential for likely significant effects on European sites arising from the Variation, including relevant hydrological source–pathway–receptor linkages. The detailed protected species surveys and mitigation measures requested by NPWS are primarily project-level requirements and are not necessary at plan level unless required to resolve potential effects on European site conservation objectives. Future development proposals will remain subject to Article 6(3) requirements, where applicable.

ID	Consultee	Comment	Action Required?	In reference to	Response
		Service to interfere with the breeding or resting place concerned to be submitted with any application for planning permission for the development proposed (see NPWS document 'Application for Regulation 54 Derogation for Annex IV Species: Guidance for Applicants', Version 2.0 , June 2026). In any proposed development within the Energy Park the use of artificial lighting should be minimised as far as possible to avoid adverse effects on otters and especially bat species. Badger surveys of the Woodlands Energy Park lands should in addition be carried out, taking account of badger setts already identified in this area in surveys undertaken in connection with the application made to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP- VL317599) for the East Meath-North Dublin Grid Upgrade development of a 400KV underground cable between the existing Woodlands Substation, Batterstown, County Meath and Belcamp Substation, Clonshaugh, Fingal. Based on these surveys badger conservation plan(s) should be drawn up in relation to any future development(s) of the Energy Park lands with the aim to as far as is feasible to retain any setts on these lands and maintaining connectivity between the setts. Breeding and wintering bird surveys to establish baseline usage of the Energy Park site by bird species should also be carried out, and any removal of hedgerows/tree rows from the Energy Park lands to facilitate their development scheduled for outside the main bird nesting season from March to August inclusive to avoid the destruction of nests, eggs and nestling birds.			
3	EPA	We acknowledge your notice, dated 14th September 2026, in relation to the Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (the 'Variation'). In our role as an SEA environmental authority under the SEA Regulations, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan. Our functions do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans. As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via the guidance document 'SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources'. This document is updated regularly and sets out our key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use Plans. We recommend that you take this guidance document into account in preparing the Variation and SEA. In preparing the Variation, Meath County Council should also ensure that the Variation aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework First Revision and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region.	No	SEA Report	SLR have utilised EPA guidance throughout the assessment of the Variation No.6 and have ensured that the SEA meets the SEA Regulations. When preparing the Variation No. 6, MCC have ensured that the Variation has adhered to relevant plans and programmes in the Region and nationally. Details on this can be found within the Variation No.6 and Section 2 of the SEA Report.
4	EPA	**Monitoring & Baseline Data** Consideration should also be given to the Environmental Monitoring set out in Table 7.1 of the National Planning Framework's First Revision SEA Statement. This monitoring should be reflected, where relevant and appropriate, in the context of future, environmental monitoring and related reporting associated with the revised CDP implementation. The inclusion of information on environmental monitoring carried out for previous Plans in this area would also be useful. This should help inform the proposed monitoring programme. Additionally, this monitoring should inform an analysis for the baseline data included in the Environmental Report.	Yes	SEA Report	SLR have reviewed this guidance when preparing the SEA Report. Monitoring of the Variation No.6 will be consistent with the CDP implementation and monitoring framework previously set out.
5	EPA	**Available Guidance & Resources** Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including: • SEA process guidance and checklists; • Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA; • Topic and sector specific SEA guidance (including Good practice note on SEA for • the Energy Sector (EPA, 2021), SEA and Integration Guidance (EPA, 2025), Good • practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment (EPA, 2020), Developing and	No	SEA Report	SLR have reviewed the EPA's SEA resources and guidance when preparing the SEA, and have utilised these in the preparation of the SEA assessment and report.

ID	Consultee	Comment	Action Required?	In reference to	Response
		• Assessing Alternatives in SEA (EPA, 2015), and Integrated Biodiversity Impact • Assessment (EPA, 2012)). You can access these guidance notes and other resources at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-topic-and-sector-specific-guidance-/			
6	EPA	**EPA SEA GIS Search and Reporting Webtool** Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now available at https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA. It allows an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area to be produced. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.	No	SEA Report	SLR have utilised the EPA SEA WebGIS tool where appropriate in preparing the SEA Scoping.
7	EPA	**Catchments.ie** Our https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water website provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the National WFD monitoring programme.	No	SEA Report	SLR have utilised the EPA map on catchment data where appropriate in preparing the SEA Scoping.
8	EPA	**EPA AA GeoTool** Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to a select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is also available through EPA https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool.	No	Appropriate Assessment	SLR have utilised the EPA AA GeoTool where appropriate in preparing the AA.
9	EPA	**Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024** In 2024, the EPA published the latest iteration of our 4-yearly State of the Environment Report. This report should be considered, and relevant aspects integrated as appropriate, in implementing the Plan outputs/ recommendations. It is available at: https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report-/.	No	SEA Report	SLR have reviewed the State of the Environment Report 2024 and included within the baseline as where appropriate.
10	EPA	**Transition to a low carbon climate resilient economy and society** You should ensure that the Variation aligns with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaptation plans.	Yes	Variation Drafting	When preparing the Variation No. 6, MCC have ensured that the Variation has adhered to relevant plans and programmes in the Region and nationally. Details on this can be found within the Variation No.6 and Section 2 of the SEA Report.
11	EPA	**Environmental Authorities** Under the SEA Regulations, you should also consult with: • Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage; • Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment; and, • Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. • any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.	Yes	Scoping	MCC have consulted with all of the Environmental Authorities under the SEA Regulations. Where responses have been received, these have been outlined in this appendix.



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Appendix D Screening Determination

Meath County Council Draft Variation 6 to County Development Plan 2021-2030 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Meath County Council

SLR Project No.: 425.069056.00001

20 November 2026

Revision Record

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Authorised By
1	18 November 2026	JR/CT	JM	JM
2	20 November 2026	LJ	KH	KH
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			
	Click to enter a date.			

Basis of Report

This document has been prepared by SLR Environmental Consulting (Ireland) Ltd (SLR) with reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the timescales and resources devoted to it by agreement with Meath County Council (the Client) as part or all of the services it has been appointed by the Client to carry out. It is subject to the terms and conditions of that appointment.

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Basis of Report i

1.0 Screening Determination 1

Screening Determination

This appendix outlines the SEA Screening Determination undertaken by Meath County Council during the preparation of the Draft Variation No. 6.

comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 (as varied): NPF Implementation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Meath County Council has prepared a proposed variation to the County Development Plan (Proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030). The proposed variation sets out the changes to the current Development Plan required to align with the findings of a study carried out by Meath County Council entitled, 'Strategic sites for energy generation and potential co-location for large energy users in County Meath'. The study provides a plan led evidence-based approach to the protection of existing energy infrastructure assets within the County and potential co-location with large energy users to enable the transition to a low-carbon economy on a commercial, industrial and community scale. A number of amendments are therefore proposed to the relevant sections of Volume One of the Plan together with Volume 3 Book of Maps once the variation is adopted.

The purpose of Variation No. 6 is to give effect to the following amendments:

1. Proposed Amendment No. 1: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 Volume 1 - Written Statement

To update Chapter 6 and 11 of the County Development Plan to provide the appropriate policy framework to protect existing energy infrastructure assets across the County and to facilitate the development of a Green Energy Park at Woodlands. This includes amendments to an existing zoning objective and the inclusion of a spot objective for the identification of a specific site at Woodlands for the development of a Green Energy Park.

2. Proposed Amendment No.2: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030 Volume 3 – Book of Maps

To add a new map entitled, 'Green Energy Park' which identifies a parcel of land at Woodlands with a zoning objective, 'TU Transport, Utility Infrastructure and Energy Infrastructure (including energy generation, storage and large energy user industry)'. The proposed zoning is illustrated under Volume 3 Book of Maps as a stand alone zoning map identified as Map 12 (Woodlands Energy Park).

An SEA Screening Assessment for proposed Variation No. 6 to the CDP was carried out having regard to criteria defined in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations. Following this assessment, Meath County Council determines that SEA is required for the proposed Variation No. 6 to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2030.

I recommend the proposed determination as set out above.

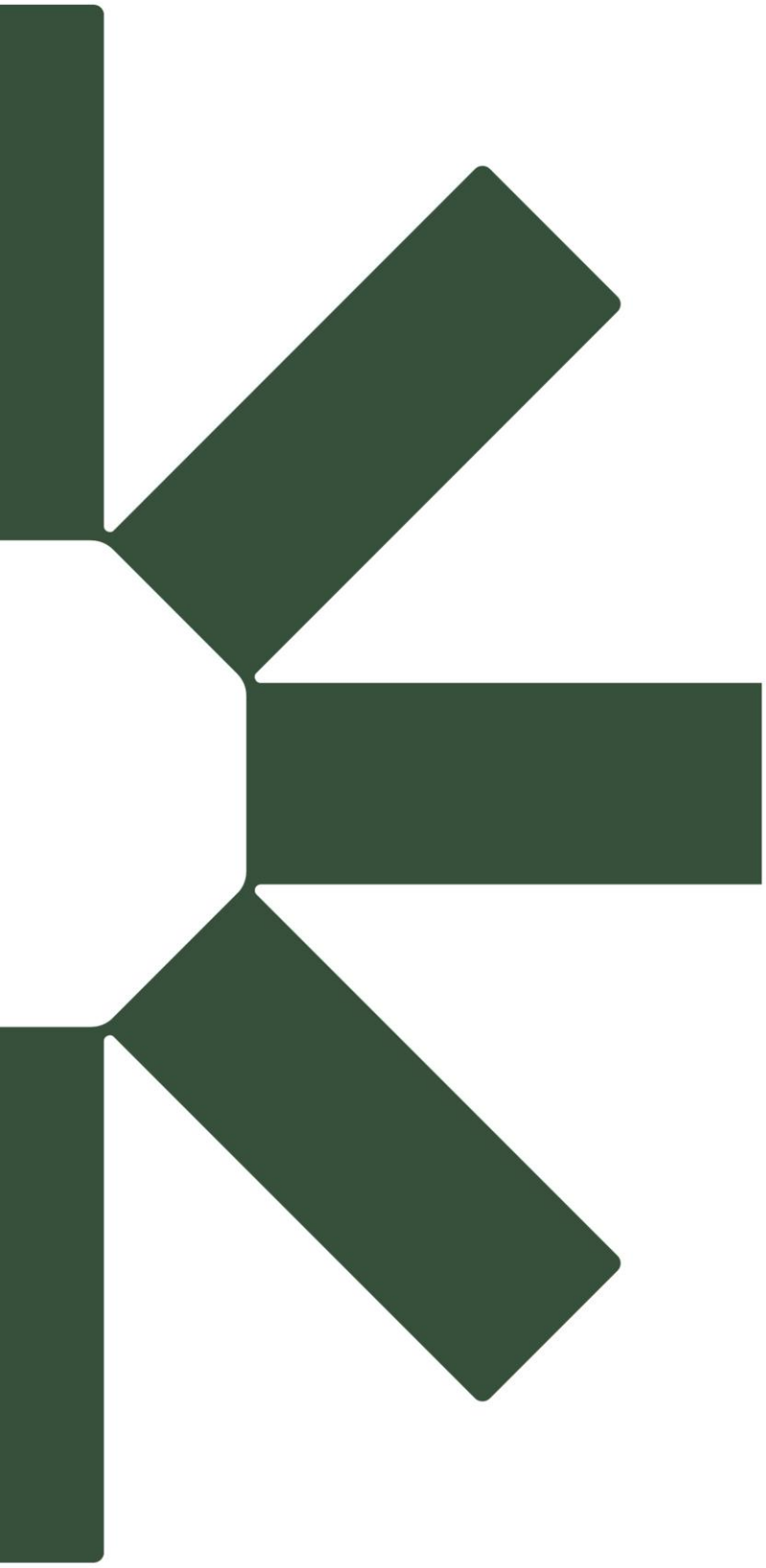
Name: Alan Russell

Alan Russell

Signature:

Title: Senior Planner

Date:18/11/2026



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