

# Social Impact Assessment Baseline Report

## *Celtic Interconnector Project*

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# 1. Introduction and Context

EirGrid, together with the French Transmission System Operator (TSO) RTE, is currently exploring options to construct and operate an interconnector between Ireland and France.

The project is still at a high-level exploratory stage; however, it has been confirmed as being a feasible project.

The project is currently within Step 2 of EirGrid's six-step *Framework for Grid Development* (Figure 1). This early Step involves identifying a shortlist of strategic technology options to meet the need for the project. To achieve this, various technology options are subject to generally high-level environmental, technical, economic and social analysis, to identify issues at this early stage, and following stakeholder input, those identified options are evaluated with a view to creating a shortlist of technology options for more detailed consideration in Step 3.

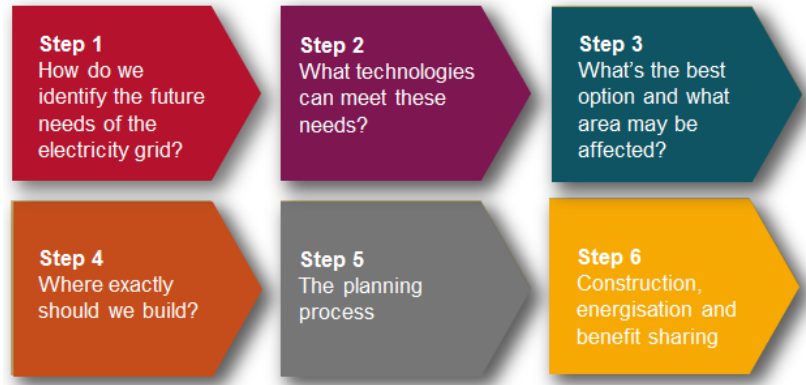


Figure 1 - EirGrid's 6-Step Framework for Grid Development

As noted above, one key criterion for consideration in respect of identified broad technology options is their potential for social impact. Social Impact Assessment occurs in reference to EirGrid's Draft *Social Impact Assessment Methodology* – although currently in draft format, this Methodology is followed for EirGrid's grid development projects.

The *SIA Methodology* is mapped against the six steps of the Framework. Step 2 in the *Methodology* requires *Early Baseline and Screening for SIA*, and has two primary deliverables: a SIA Baseline Report, and a formal Screening for SIA. This Report includes both the Social Baseline for the Celtic Interconnector project, and includes a Screening for SIA.

This Report builds upon information already gathered in respect of the project. In particular, this includes technical and environmental feasibility studies, and other analysis, prepared in respect of both the Celtic Interconnector project, and previous projects within the identified Social Area of Influence (SAOI – see below). It is an iterative document that will be built upon throughout the various Steps of project development as per EirGrid's Framework for Grid Development, as more information becomes available, particularly through stakeholder engagement.

## 2. Identifying the Social Area of Influence (SAOI) for the Celtic Interconnector Project

In summary, as per Figure 2 below, the Celtic Interconnector project comprises a new 700 megawatt (MW) capacity power line connecting the transmission systems of France and Ireland. This will include an approximately 500 km long submarine cable. The technology for this cable will be Direct Current (DC), and so a converter station is required at either end of the DC cable to convert the electricity to Alternating Current (AC) for use on the national grids of both countries. This will also thereby require an AC circuit connection between the converter station and a grid substation node.

At this early Step in the project development process, no location or site has been selected for landfall for the submarine cable, the converter station, or the grid connection point. However, technical and environmental studies have been undertaken to explore strategic options that, at this stage, appear to be feasible.

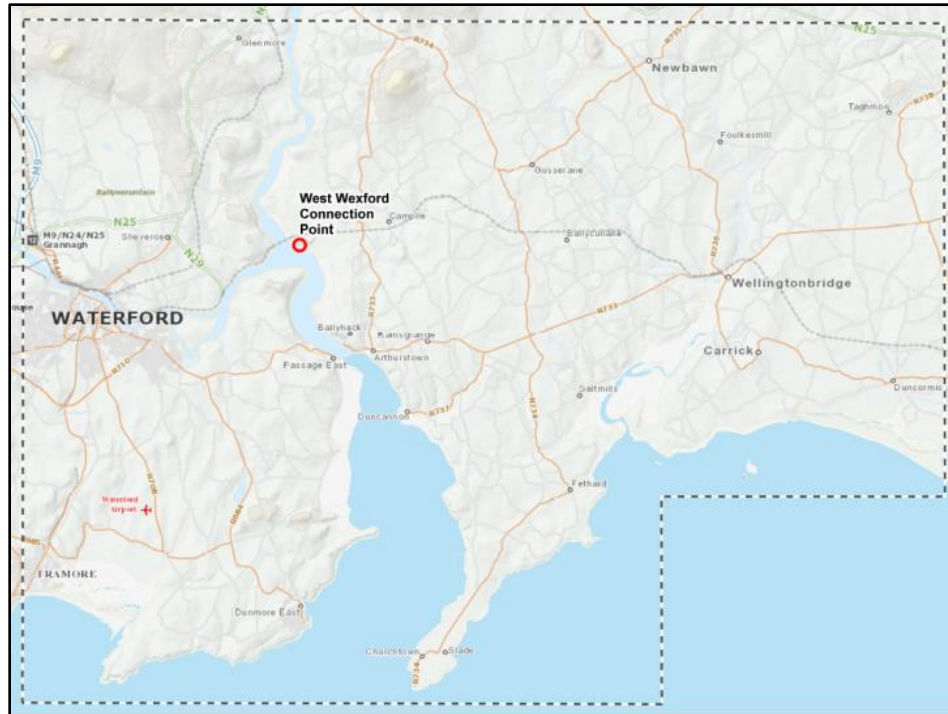


Figure 2 - Illustrative Schematic of the Celtic Interconnector Project

Given the currently envisaged capacity (700 MW) of the Interconnector, it will require to connect to a higher capacity substation node on the 220 kV Irish grid network. There are only two such nodes (“Connection Points”) in the southern region of Ireland – Knockraha Substation in Co. Cork, and Great Island Substation in Co. Wexford. These are respectively termed the East Cork and West Wexford Connection Points (Figure 3, Figure 4 & Figure 5).



Figure 3 - The East Cork (Knockraha) and West Wexford (Great Island) Connection Points



#### Figure 4 - The West Wexford Connection Point and Vicinity



### Figure 5 - The East Cork Connection Point and Vicinity



EirGrid commissioned ESBI to prepare a Feasibility Study for the Celtic Interconnector project for the onshore elements of the overall project – comprising landfall locations, route options, and converter station locations.

The purpose of this Feasibility Study was to indicate whether such necessary onshore connection was feasible from a technical and environmental perspective. However, its purpose was not to identify nor evaluate specific landfall, route or converter station locations.

The Study concluded that for both Connection Points, there were various feasible landfall locations and onshore underground cable route options. These are identified in Figure 6 & Figure 7.

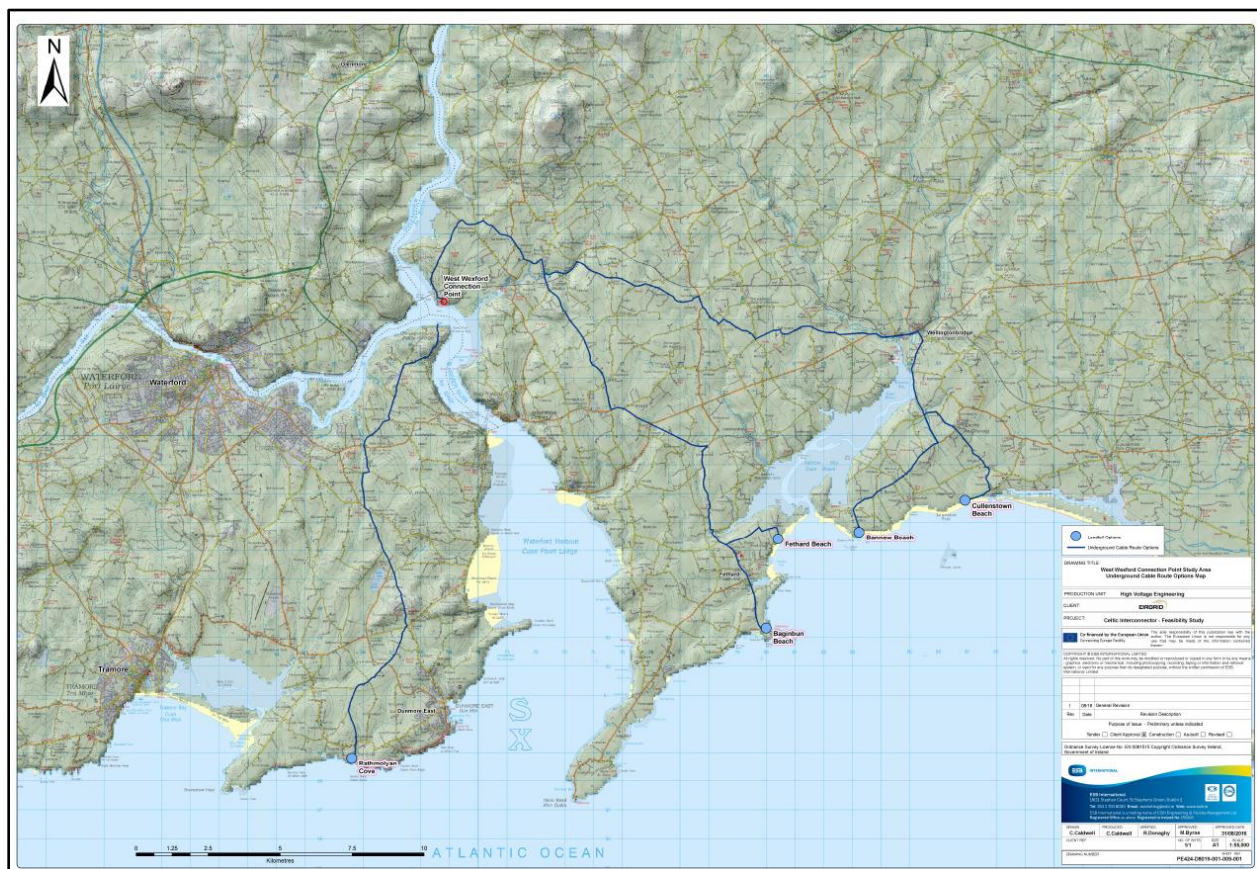


Figure 6 - Identified Feasible Landfall Locations and Underground Cable Route Options to West Wexford Connection Point

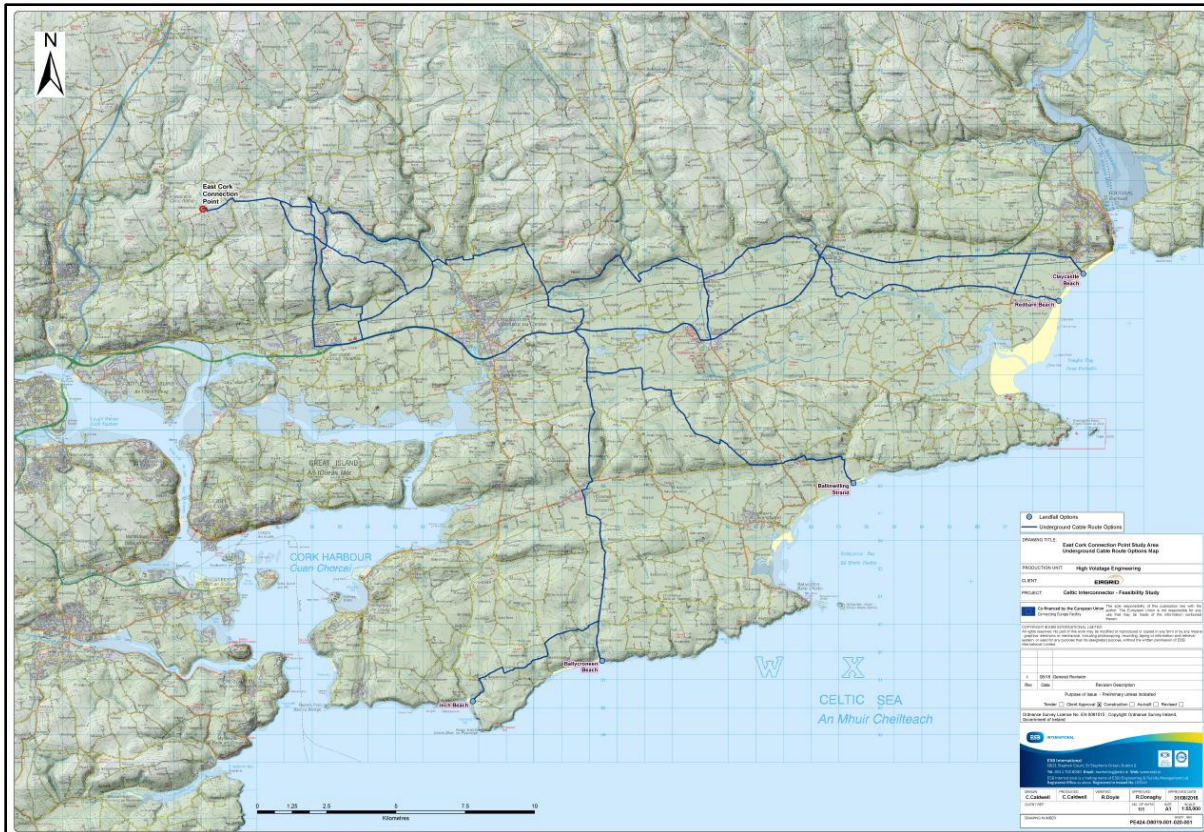


Figure 7 - Identified Feasible Landfall Locations and Underground Cable Route Options to East Cork Connection Point

The investigations carried out in this Feasibility Study have facilitated the identification of the Social Area of Influence (SAOI) for the Celtic Interconnector project in both the West Wexford and East Cork areas. This is illustrated in Figure 8 & Figure 9 below. It should be noted that the SAOIs do not have absolute fixed boundaries, and moreover, that the SAOI is likely to evolve and alter as more information is obtained during the project development process.

In summary, the West Wexford SAOI extends from the East Waterford coastline, and includes the confluence of the Rivers Suir and Barrow, the area north and east of Great Island, the Hook Peninsula, and eastwards to Wellingtonbridge, and the area east of Bannow Bay.



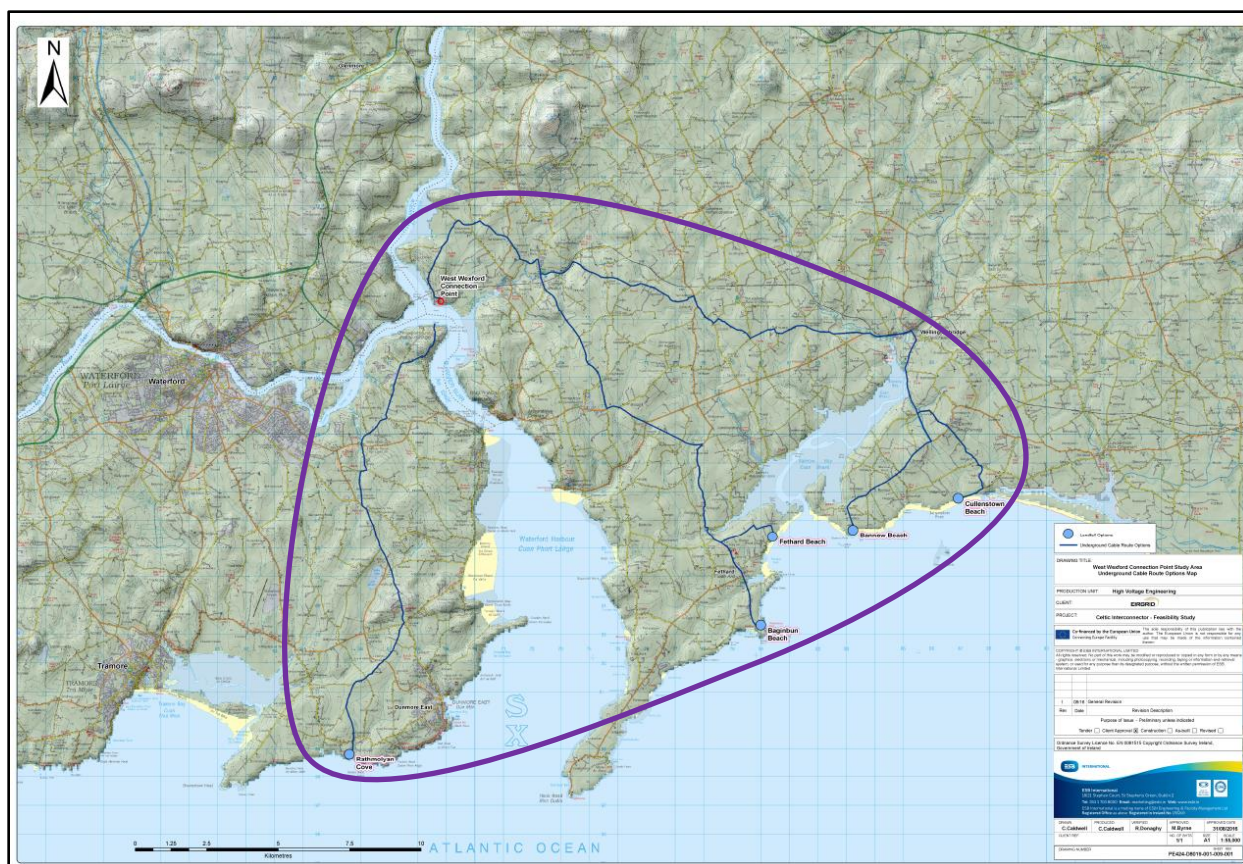


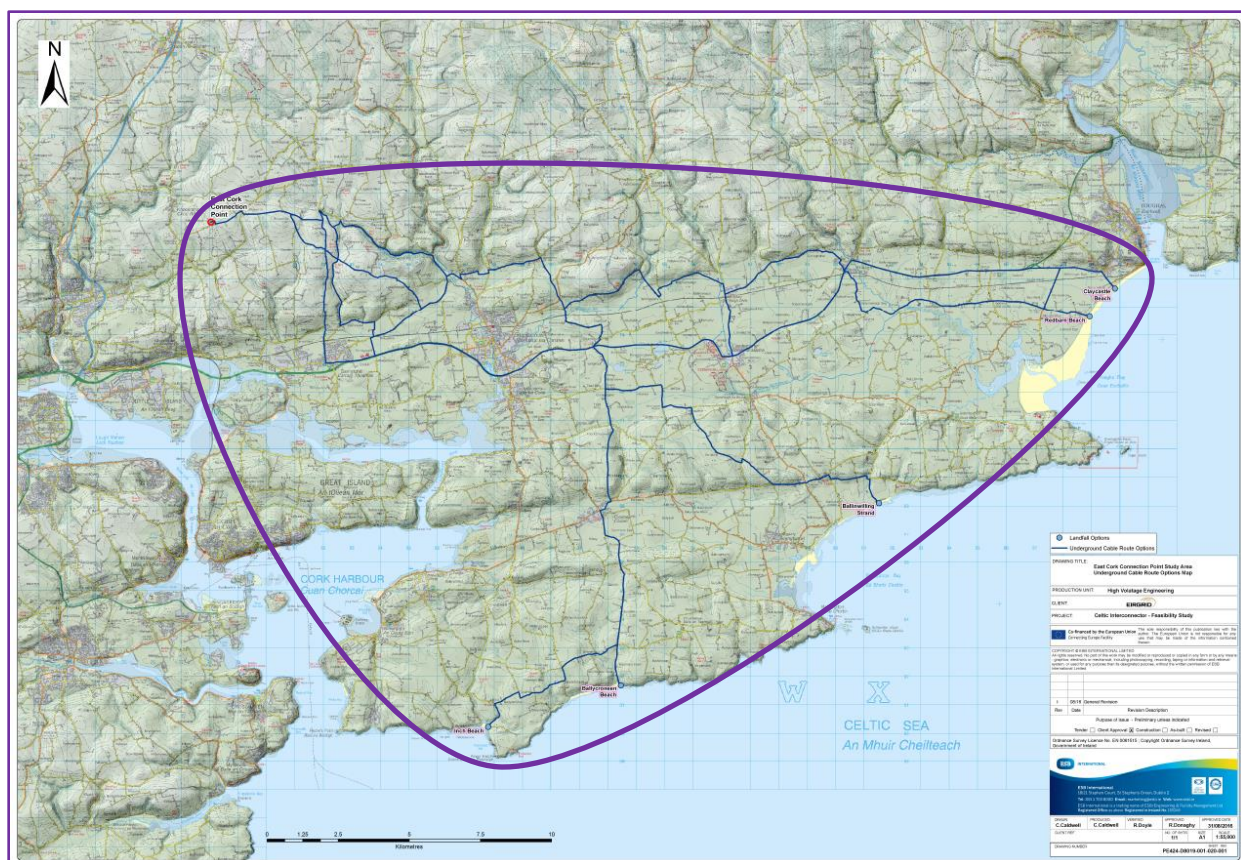
Figure 8 - Identified West Wexford SAOI for the Celtic Interconnector Project

The East Cork SAOI extends from the East Cork coastline at the River Blackwater estuary, across to the eastern shoreline of Cork Harbour, and northwards to the area of Knockraha.

It is noted that the connection of the Celtic Interconnector onto the national grid at either connection point has the potential to require associated reinforcements to the grid network. The nature, location and extent of such associated reinforcement, if indeed required, has not been confirmed at this point in time.

As such, the SAOI for the purposes of this Step 2 SIA Baseline Report is restricted to the specific potential area of the Celtic Interconnector itself. The SAOI can alter as more information in respect of the project is obtained – this is provided for in EirGrid's SIA Methodology.





### 3. Social Baseline within the West Wexford SAOI

#### Environment and Setting

The area of the West Wexford SAOI is very much shaped by its relationship with the coastline. The southern coastline includes the sandy shoreline at the eastern portion of the SAOI in the vicinity of Bannow Bay, at the western end of the extensive sand dunes of Ballyteige Burrow. This gives way in the central and western portions to the rocky shorelines on either side of Waterford Harbour, with the Hook Peninsula on its eastern side, and east Co. Waterford on its western side.

Bannow Bay is a wide channel formed by the confluence of a number of rivers (including the Owenduff and Corock) in the area of Wellingtonbridge, but restricted at its southern end by a narrow neck of land north-east of Fethard. The wide channel of Waterford Harbour is formed by the confluence of the Rivers Barrow and Suir; a significant volume of water pushes through a narrow meandering channel at the northern end of Waterford Harbour, with the result that there is a significant current flow within the northern and central parts of the Harbour. A busy ferry service operates across the northern end of Waterford Harbour, between Ballyhack in Co. Waterford and Passage East in Co. Waterford.

The primary land use in the area is agricultural, with a mix of grazing and arable activity. The land is relatively flat or undulating, particularly in the eastern and central portions of the SAOI; the lands in the western portion of the SAOI in Co. Waterford are somewhat more hilly, particularly at its southern end, near the coastline.

#### Community and Amenity

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the coastline formation has significantly influenced the pattern of settlement and road layout in the SAOI. Within the eastern portion, **Wellingtonbridge**, at the northern end of Bannow Bay is the primary settlement, with the generally east-west oriented R736 Rosslare-New Ross regional road serving southern Co. Wexford veering northwards to pass through the town; this road is part of the signed “Bannow Drive” amenity route. The R733 Wexford-New Ross regional road also passes through the town.

The bridge over the Corock River, and the floodplain of the river, forms a natural break in the urban form of the town, such that activities are on the eastern side or western side of the town.

Wellingtonbridge is the major commercial centre of the area, including supermarket, other retail such as hardware/garden centre, petrol station, garage, pharmacy, post office, agri-sales, kitchen/bedroom/tile showroom, and car sales. It includes other commercial activity such as public house, restaurants and take-away, and launderette.

Of particular social interest, the former railway station in Wellingtonbridge is located in the heart of the town, on the now disused line between Rosslare and Waterford, (via Campile and across a bridge over the River Barrow north of the Great Island Power Station). This line only closed in

2010, but the tracks are still laid, with potential for future commercial or amenity use. In addition, a green space in the town, adjacent to the river, includes a picnic bench. To the south of the town, off the regional road on the eastern side of Bannow Bay, is another graveled car parking area with picnic bench, facing over the wide expanse of the Bay, and the open rural landscape on its western side.

At a wider level, the town functions as a gateway to the settlements and amenities of the West Wexford coastal area, including Tintern Abbey, north of Saltmills (see below).

As the main settlement in this area, the town includes an extent of clustered residential development, as well as linear residential development on approach roads. Overall, however, the population of the area appears to be relatively low<sup>1</sup>.

Elsewhere, within the eastern portion of the SAOI – on the eastern side of Bannow Bay – the settlement structure is restricted to a number of small villages or hamlets. Further to the east of, but outside, the SAOI are the larger villages of Duncormick, Bridgetown, Kilmore and Kilmore Quay. There is extensive linear residential development along the local and regional road network of this area, but no particular community or social structure is evident. Overall, the population of the eastern portion of the SAOI is low.

However, the southern coastline demonstrates clear evidence of amenity activity. The coastal hamlet of **Cullenstown** overlooks the beach, which from a visual perspective (it is severed by a river estuary) extends from Ballyteige Burrow to the east, to Bannow Beach to the west. There is a real sense of community pride and value in Cullenstown Strand, with stone signage, notice board, a garden at the entrance to the beach, shower and toilets. The beach is accessed via the single relatively narrow road through the hamlet. There is also a narrow local road network extending out of the hamlet, flanked by high-banked hedgerows, which together contribute to a feeling of unspoilt rural coastal ambience, notwithstanding the linear residential development along the local road network in the area.



Plate 1- Signed entrance to Cullenstown Strand

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this Report, we have refrained from referencing official population statistics, which remain those of the 2011 Census, on the basis that the results of the 2016 Census are likely to be available in the next while, and can be used in subsequent Reports.





Plate 2 - Toilet block and garden at Cullenstown Strand



Plate 3 - View east at entrance to Cullenstown Strand

Further to the south-west along the coastline, Bannow Beach is accessed off an attractive local road network, tree-lined from where this extends westwards off the regional road, contributing to a sense of rural amenity. In the vicinity of the beach, the local road becomes narrow. The beach itself is stony, but clearly functions as a significant community amenity as an attractive walking area, under the cliffs which frame the beach. Two boats were moored in the cove at the time of survey. Overall, this is an isolated area, with no particular community core or attractor, other than the beach itself.



Plate 4 - View over Bannow Beach



Plate 5 - View east over Bannow Beach



Plate 6 - View north to Wellingtonbridge by Bannow Bay

Within the southern portion of the SAOI, in the area of the Hook Peninsula, again the permanent resident population is low, with dwellings again primarily extending along the local road network of this area. The primary settlement in this area is **Fethard**, on the eastern side of the Hook Peninsula. The village includes commercial and retail uses such as public houses, restaurants, takeaways, hotel, pharmacy, post office grocery with petrol station, and hair salon. A new school is located to the north of the village, while a GAA club is located to the south.

Fethard is a key coastal node in this area, and consequently extends some considerable distance from its core, with dwellings lined along the narrow coastal roads of the area. Extensive housing frames the seascape from the beach. The beach forms a key heart of the village, and is clearly a much-used community and tourism amenity, with a good quality ramp and railings down from the coast road, adjacent to which is a bike parking area and signage. A large number of people were walking the beach at the time of survey in April 2017, outside the summer tourism season.



Plate 7 - Fethard beach and ramped access



Plate 8 - Local road access in the area of Fethard Beach



To the south of the village is Baginburn Beach, also a very attractive beach, set below cliffs. While it has signage as part of a walking route, its distance from Fethard means that it does not have the same sense of public or community amenity as the main beach. Indeed, it is outside the area of influence of the village, with little in the way of linear residential development along the local road, or public activity in the area of the beach.



Plate 9 - View over Baginburn Beach



Plate 10 - Access path to Baginburn Beach

Significantly, Fethard has social facilities such as an RNLI station, as well as a playground in the centre of the town. The uses reflect the position of the village as an important coastal and holiday destination within south Co. Wexford. This is also reflected in the residential fabric of the village, which includes holiday house clusters and caravan/mobile home parks.

Fethard is on a key tourism route to the amenity node of Hook Head and Lighthouse. Loftus Hall is another tourism attraction along the peninsula.

Within the central portion of the SAOI, there are a number of coastal village settlements such as **Saltmills, Duncannon, Arthurstown and Ballyhack**. These have a variety of social and

community facilities, in addition to residential dwellings. As noted above, Ballyhack is the location of the pier terminal for the ferry which connects with Passage East in Co. Waterford. Duncannon has a wide beach, and is a popular tourist destination with associated facilities such as 5-a-side pitches, holiday homes, playground, and mobile home park. Duncannon Fort, a visitor attraction, is located at the western end of the beach.

Dunbrody House, located to the east of Arthurstown, is an important tourism amenity in this area, comprising a hotel with restaurant, cookery school, and micro-brewery.

Inland, the two main settlements in the central portion of the SAOI are **Ramsgrange** and **Campile**. These settlements have less influence from a coastal location, and include retail and community facilities such as shops, public houses, and churches (the parish church and school of Campile is located outside the village in the townland of Horeswood, which also includes a community playschool). Ramsgrange has a secondary school and a Credit Union. The southern approach to Campile is framed by the railway bridge of the now disused railway line; the village includes a large co-op, tool hire, and petrol station. Both settlements are the location of clustered residential development; however, there is also extensive linear residential development along the regional and local road network of this area.

Campile is located to the east of the Great Island Power Station. The now disused railway line extends from the village to the bridge over the River Barrow to the north of the Power Station. Within this area, there are a significant number of existing overhead power lines both at 110 kV and at 220 kV (and including large double-circuit structures). There appears to be a lesser extent of linear residential development on the local road network in this area than elsewhere throughout the SAOI. A number of these circuits span the River Barrow from the western side of the River Barrow.

To the south of the railway line, west of Campile, is Dunbrody Abbey, another cultural heritage tourism amenity in this area, with associated car park and facilities. The Abbey is set on rising land, with extensive views over the power station complex.



Plate 11 - View across Dunbrody Abbey to Great Island



Plate 12 - Local road approaching Great Island

North of Campile is the extensive John F Kennedy Arboretum, again a significant visitor attraction in the West Wexford area. To the north-west of Campile, on the local road to Great Island, is the attraction of Kilmokea House and Gardens; while there is a stone village sign for Kilmokea, there does not appear to be any real settlement core.

It is noted that the Great Island Power Station, and associated transmission infrastructure has been a feature of this area for some five decades – refer to <http://architectureireland.ie/the-poolbeg-of-the-south-east-great-island-power-station>. Originally an oil-fired power station, it now operates as a combined cycle gas turbine station, with the existing transmission substation located within the overall complex.

Great Island station was previously identified as a potential node of the Grid Link project when the project was originally being considered as a new power line connection between the Cork and Dublin areas. The Grid Link project is no longer being progressed by EirGrid.

The western portion of the West Wexford SAOI comprises that portion on the western side of Waterford Harbour, within Co. Waterford.

**Passage East** is the western pier terminus of the ferry crossing at the northern end of Waterford Harbour. It is a village of narrow streets, focused on coastal activities, which in addition to the ferry includes inshore fishing with fishing boats moored in the small harbour. The village has a clustered residential settlement pattern, with local retail and commercial facilities including public house and post office.

North of Passage East, the regional road extends northwards to the settlement of **Faithlegge**. The village has a church, located adjacent to a ruined church and graveyard. However, the area is dominated by the Hotel and Golf Club, with associated dwellings within the complex. This is a major tourism amenity of the area. North of this, at the northern end of the peninsula where the River Suir meets the River Barrow, there is additional settlement, with community facilities.



To the west of this area, within the River Suir corridor, is Little Island. This is the location of Waterford Castle Hotel and Golf Club, which also includes on-site holiday houses. Access to Little Island is via a ferry. This area essentially marks the urban influence of the eastern environs of Waterford City, and is dominated by residential estates, with associated commercial, retail and community facilities. The transition between the rural area and the suburban environs of Waterford City in this area is quite abrupt.

The local road network to the south of Passage East contains linear residential development, but little in the way of social or community facilities. The primary settlement in this portion of the SAOI is **Dunmore East**, located on the western shoreline of the southern end of Waterford Harbour. The village is centred around the harbour and its associated commercial fishing activities, and is bounded to the north by a Golf Club. The village has a variety of retail and commercial activities including shop, restaurants, pub, and post office. A clustered residential settlement pattern surrounds the core of the village. The village is a significant all year round visitor attraction, with the influence of Waterford City to the north-west.

South-west of Dunmore East is the beachfront of Rathmoylan Cove. This small beach cove is accessed via a narrow rural road. A small number of holiday homes and/or mobile homes are located on this road, in close proximity to the cove. There is a small amount of linear residential development further away from the cove on the regional road. There is little community or social activity in this area, which is quite isolated, and located off the main route between Dunmore East and Tramore. This road is signed as the “South East Coastal Drive”.



Figure 10 - Rathmoylan Cove (source: Google Maps)

To the west of Rathmoylan Cove, outside the West Wexford SAOI, is the major resort of Tramore. While a key settlement in the wider south Co. Waterford area, it is not considered further in this Baseline Report.

## 4. Social Baseline within the East Cork SAOI

### Environment and Setting

The area of the East Cork SAOI is also defined to a significant extent by water, extending westwards from the River Blackwater estuary – the border between Counties Waterford and Cork – around a generally rocky coastline to Cork Harbour.

Inland, the area primarily comprises agricultural lands, with a number of villages and towns. It extends northwards to the area of the existing transmission substation in Knockraha, north of Cork City. Given the proximity to the City, the area accommodates major road infrastructure, in particular the M8 which extends in a generally north-south orientation, and the N25 Wexford-Cork road which extends in a generally east-west orientation, and connects a number of the major settlements of the area.

In general the land of the SAOI is undulating, but rises in particular northwards between Cork City and Knockraha. The existing transmission substation, and the associated overhead power lines which connect to the substation, are prominent features on the skyline when viewed from the M8 corridor when travelling in a northerly direction from the City.

### Community and Amenity

Within the eastern portion of the SAOI, **Youghal**, on the western shore of the Blackwater estuary is the primary settlement. It is by-passed by the N25, but ultimately this National Route forms the key road connection westwards with Cork City, and eastwards to Waterford and Wexford. It is also connected by the regional road network to Fermoy and the M8.

The town is a major settlement link between Co. Waterford and Co. Cork. It is centred around the harbour area, with a mix of commercial and leisure marine activities. It also has regional-scale commercial activities such as car showrooms, and a business park, in addition to public houses, restaurants, and retail uses. It includes a GAA Club, greyhound track, leisure centre, and Golf Club, as well as a significant extent of residential development, both within the core urban area, and in outlying clustered estates.

A major entertainment centre is located at the southern part of the town. This may be supported by the significant number of holiday mobile homes located in parks to the south of the town, in proximity to a long strand that stretches southwards from the town. This is known as Claycastle Beach (a blue flag beach). This is a key all-year-round amenity of the town, and at the time of survey in April 2017, was busily used, presumably by residents and/or workers of the town. The strand area is accessed via a large car park, and promenade which extends the full length of the strand. The strand road is fronted by attractive terraces of period dwellings. The beachfront and promenade appears to be an extremely popular and important amenity for the town. This area is primary location for the mobile home parks, suggesting that summer tourism is an important part of the social fabric of the town. This is emphasised by the very large size of the car park serving Claycastle Beach and the promenade.



Plate 13 - Claycastle Beach and promenade



Plate 14 - View east along promenade to Youghal



Plate 15 - View east to Youghal from Beach car park



Claycastle Beach extends for a considerable distance southwards from Youghal. There appears to be little in the way of formal access to the beach once outside the environs of the town, until the area known as Redbarn Beach, accessed off the local road network to the south of the town. This area is landmarked by a large Quality hotel, with decking and seating area directly situated on the beachfront. The hotel includes an extensive cluster of holiday houses, with mobile homes also located in this area, again emphasising the seasonal tourism importance of this area. At this location, there were also a good number of people walking the rough lands above the beach, which is ultimately connected northwards to the promenade at Claycastle Beach. Redbarn Beach is well managed, with good signage and local road access.



Plate 16 - Access to Redbarn Beach by Quality Hotel



Plate 17 - Redbarn Beach from decked frontage of Hotel



Plate 18 - Hotel holiday village at Redbarn Beach

From Youghal, the N25 connects the main settlements in the East Cork area. These include **Castle Martyr** and **Midleton**. Castle Martyr is a crossroads settlement, but prominent due to its major tourism destination of a hotel and golf resort, which forms part of a large demesne. The village has a significant amount of residential development, which may be due to the influence of its relative proximity to the commercial and employment opportunities of Cork City. It includes public houses, shops, specialist services such as barber and clinic, and restaurants/cafes.

Midleton is by far the largest town in the East Cork area. It accommodates a number of commercial and employment uses, in particular including a number of business parks, and an important whiskey distillery that also has a tourism value for the town. It supports a sizeable residential population, in particular located in estates which surround the town core; the core area is by-passed to the south by the N25. A golf club is located to the north-west of the town. The town also includes key social and community facilities such as GAA Club, schools and churches. Of importance, it is linked by railway to Cork City.

Midleton is located at the very eastern end of the wider Cork Harbour area. Further to the west along the N25, the area is increasingly identified as part of the suburban environs of Cork City. This includes the area of Fota, including Fota Island which is an important tourism destination including hotel, golf course, and wildlife park. It includes the major commercial and employment area of Little Island. It includes a number of residential suburbs such as Carrigtohill, Glounthaune, and Glanmire; this essentially comprises the western extent of the East Cork SAOI, on the eastern side of the M8 corridor.

To the south of the N25 between Youghal and Castle Martyr, the area is relatively unpopulated, although there is extensive linear residential development along the road network of the area. The settlement of **Ladysbridge**, to the south of Castle Martyr, is the only village in this area; it includes clustered residential development set around a main street which includes a church, public house and petrol station, which also contains a grocery.

Further to the south-east of Ladysbridge are the coastal resort areas of **Garryvoe**, **Shanagarry** and **Ballycotton**. Garryvoe is the centre of extensive area of holiday mobile homes, with associated facilities. A large car park is located adjacent to a long sandy blue flag beach. The Garryvoe Hotel is a substantial building in this location, near which is a small shop. To the north of Garryvoe, the area is an open rural undulating and unpopulated landscape, served by a local road network which accommodates a very limited extent of linear residential development. A local road leads to Ballinwilling Strand, a shingle beach accessed via a ramp from the road. A small car park is located at the top of the ramp, as is a single dwelling, of new construction but appearing unoccupied. This area is not attached to any settlement or social setting, and is very isolated, particularly in contrast to that occurring at Garryvoe further south.

Shanagarry and Ballycotton are also popular beachside amenity areas. As with Garryvoe, Shanagarry accommodates a mix of permanent and holiday home (including mobile home) residential development. A car park is located by the beachfront, with a shop located within the village area. Ballycotton is an attractive linear settlement set over the sea on low cliffs, and serves a permanent and tourist residential population with commercial and community facilities including public houses, restaurant, and church. An RNLI station is located at the attractive working harbour in the village which accommodates inshore fishing vessels.



Plate 19 - View over Ballinwilling Strand



Plate 20 - Open agricultural lands at Ballinwilling Strand

West of Ballycotton, the southern part of the SAOI is relatively unpopulated, although linear residential development occurs along the local road network of this area. The coastline is relatively rocky, and consequently there is no beachfront which might form the focus for a residential or amenity settlement or attraction. This is also influenced by the orientation of the local road network whereby the east-west oriented roads are located inland from the coast, with a relatively small number of north-south oriented roads extending to the coastline.

These crossroads form the location for a number of small hamlets and townland communities, such as Churchtown. An exception to this is the larger village of **Cloyne**, located on the R629 regional road between Shanagarry and Midleton. Cloyne is an important ecclesiastical settlement, and the current location of the Church of Ireland Diocesan cathedral – the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross covers most of County Cork. The village was established as a monastic settlement in c. 560 AD, and includes both the cathedral and a round tower. The village also includes a parish church, post office, public houses, café/restaurants, pharmacy, and other specialist commercial activities such as vet, hair salon, butcher, and bookmakers. A considerable extent of residential development is clustered around the village core, and extending along the road network serving the village.

A local road extends southwards from Cloyne across a generally open rural agricultural landscape to the only part of the coastline within this area that includes a beach – in the townland of Ballycroneen. The beach area itself is relatively small and remote, with no signage, and no suggestion that it functions as a major local social or community amenity area. There are a cluster of dwellings including mobile homes at the beach area – these did not have any sign of occupancy at the time of survey in April 2017, suggesting they may be holiday homes. There is little other linear residential development on the local area in the wider vicinity of the beach. However, some distance north-west of the beach, along a local road is Ballycroneen National School, comprising the original schoolhouse and an extension thereto.



Plate 21 - Local road to Ballycroneen Beach





Plate 22 - View over Ballycroneen Beach



Plate 23 - Dwelling development at Ballycroneen Beach

The beach is part of a longer sandy shoreline in this vicinity (Ballycroneen Beach is somewhat visually and physically separated from this longer sandy shoreline by a rock outcrop), which at its south-western end is known as Ballybranigan Beach. This is accessed off a narrow local road, with a car parking area. To the south-west of this beach, the coastline reverts to a rocky form, extending to Power Head.

The generally rocky coastline extends north and westwards from Power Head to Roche's Point, at the eastern entrance to Cork Harbour. There are a few exceptions to this, which offer public access to the shoreline, including Gyleen (which includes a slipway for small boats). Trabolgan Holiday Village is located to the east of Roche's Point, and has potential access to the shoreline (which appears to be currently blocked off).

However, by far the most extensive and prominent beach area along this stretch of coastline is Inch Beach. While a relatively small beach, it is extensively used as a local amenity area. A surfing school is established at the beach, and it benefits from good signage. The area includes a concentration of holiday homes along the local road network. However, the beach is surrounded by open agricultural lands.



Plate 24 - View over Inch Beach



Plate 25 - Access and surf school at Inch Beach



Plate 26 - Lands behind Inch Beach

**Whitegate** is located on the eastern shoreline of Cork Harbour, north of Roches Point. While the village has core retail and commercial facilities, and supports a clustered residential population, the village is dominated by the extensive Whitegate Refinery, located to the south-west of the village.

To the north-east of Whitegate, also along the shoreline of Cork Harbour, are the settlements of **Lower Aghada** (proximate to the coast) and **Upper Aghada** (further inland). In addition to clustered residential development, located off the local road network, the overall settlement is served by facilities such as church, school, post office, petrol station, and restaurant. A sailing club and tennis club is located on the regional road to Whitegate, with a number of yachts and smaller boats moored in the bay. A GAA Club is located to the north of the village.

Of note, a large transmission substation is located to the south-west of the village, off the regional road between Aghada and Whitegate. As a consequence, the area accommodates an amount of existing overhead line infrastructure. However, this can be visually and physically understood as comprising part of the overall infrastructure hub of the refinery complex.

North of the N25, between Youghal and Midleton, the area of the SAOI is characterised by open agricultural landscape, with linear residential development along the local road network of the area. There are a number of villages and hamlets in this area, such as **Moygeely**, **Killeagh** (located on the N25), and **Dungourney**. Similarly, the area north of the N25 between Midleton and the M8 corridor contains settlement such as **Leamlara**, **Lisgoold**, and **Ballincurrig**, all along the regional road between Midleton and Rathcormac to the north.

Of most significance to this Baseline Report, the village of **Knockraha** is located to the north-east of Cork City, on the eastern side of the M8 corridor. In addition to clustered residential development particularly on its northern and western side, the village has a well-defined social and community core, which includes a primary school, community centre, church and childcare centre, as well as public house.

The Knockraha 220 kV transmission substation is located some distance to the south-east of the village, along a local road that also accommodates scattered residential development, some in close proximity to the substation. As a consequence, the wider area and agricultural landscape accommodates overhead transmission structures. It is noted that, previously, Knockraha substation was identified as the western terminus of the Grid Link project, and has been the subject of local public interest in respect of grid development projects. As noted above, the Grid Link project is no longer being progressed by EirGrid.



Figure 11 - Aerial Photo of Knockraha Village, and Knockraha 220 kV substation (source: Google Maps)



## 5. Formal Screening for Social Impact Assessment

Having regard to the nature and extent, and potential location of the proposed Celtic Interconnector Development, to the social baseline of the identified Social Areas Of Influence in both West Wexford and East Cork, and to the level of information gathered to date, it is concluded that the potential for the project to have a social impact cannot be ruled out at this point in time.

It is therefore concluded that the Celtic Interconnector project should proceed to Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in accordance with EirGrid's Draft SIA Methodology.

At this early stage it is considered that there is no preference between the two areas in terms of potential social impact.

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