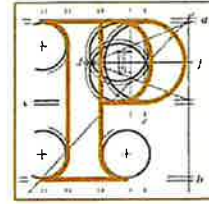
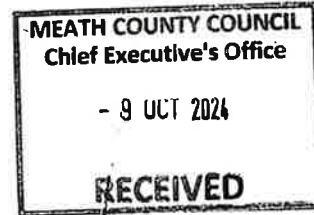


Our Case Number: ABP-318573-23



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Meath County Council
Martin Murray
Director of Services, Transportation
Buvinda House
Dublin Road, Navan
Co. Meath



Date: 08 October 2024

Re: A proposed Road Development comprising of the N2 Slane By-Pass and Public Realm Enhancement Scheme
Within the Townlands of Slane, County Meath

Dear Sir / Madam,

I refer further to the above mentioned proposed road development.

Please be advised that the Board, in accordance with section 51(4) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, hereby requires you to furnish the following additional information in relation to the matters raised in the submissions and in my review of the application:

1. In the interest of clarity, please provide an overlay of the proposed development works on the land use zoning map for the area
2. It is noted that since the submission of the application, the Climate Action Plan 2024 has been published, while the application submission refers to the Climate Action Plan 2023. Please provide a statement addressing any implications of this with respect to the proposed development. Please also review any other updates to relevant policy or legislation since the submission of the application
3. Following an initial review of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement submitted, the following queries are raised, and further information is sought on each of the below items:
 - a) **Cofferdams and water management during construction:** There are inconsistencies in the description of potential water ingress to the cofferdams during bridge construction between the Natura Impact Statement, Chapter 5 and Chapter 18 with references to both 'constant ingress' and 'limited dewatering'. Regarding the proposed use of the attenuation ponds for water

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- management during this phase of construction, or potential tankering, it is unclear whether the level of water ingress has been quantified and the water management system designed accordingly. The applicant shall provide calculations on the expected volume of ingress to the cofferdams during the construction phase, with cognisance of the alluvial subsoils, together with the capacity of the attenuation ponds to treat the expected volumes. If tankering is proposed, clarify the expected number of tanker trips and confirm disposal facility options.
- b) **Riverbank exclusion zone:** An exception is noted to the 10m exclusion zone from the riverbank (e.g. Natura Impact Statement Section 6.2.1.1.1.) for the construction of four outfalls. The applicant shall clarify if this relates to the scour mats shown in drawing DR0004. As there is no further reference to these works in the Natura Impact Statement or Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity chapters, provide an assessment of same, and describe any mitigation measures (e.g. manual installation, timing of works) required to avoid adverse effects to qualifying interest of the European Sites, or any other habitats, flora or fauna.
- c) **Potential groundwater dependant habitats:** On a precautionary basis, the applicant is requested to have regard to the potential for unmapped areas of Alkaline fen habitat in the Appropriate Assessment Screening, as stated in the site-specific conservation objectives for The River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation and consider whether likely significant effects can be excluded. If likely effects cannot be excluded, the adequacy of the mitigation measures in the Natura Impact Statement should be considered in the context of the conservation objectives for this qualifying interest. Available information suggests that groundwater-dependant habitats may occur within Crewbane Marsh pNHA, with soil mapping showing groundwater gleys at this location, and Goodwillie (1992) Information on Areas of Scientific Interest report (available on npws.ie) referencing fen habitat at this location. A submission (M) also references tufa springs at Crewbane. Given the location of this site in private lands, the applicant should engage with the BSBI recorder to see if they have any further data on habitats within the site. A pathway for impacts via potentially impeding groundwater flows to groundwater-dependant habitats the process of excavating the road cuttings has not been identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity assessments. The applicant is requested to confirm whether there is the potential for any groundwater flow paths to Crewbane Marsh pNHA to be altered by the proposed road cutting and any associated rock excavations. This shall be confirmed by a hydrogeologist, and any consequences for the Appropriate Assessment or Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity assessments addressed by the applicant's ecologists.
- d) **Wintering Birds:** The applicant shall, through the provision of updated bird use maps, confirm locations of Golden Plover and Lapwing recorded during the winter farmland bird surveys (Appendix 15.2, Table 26, 27 and 28) and during the overwintering wildfowl surveys undertaken in 2020/2021 (Appendix 15.2, Table 33). These maps should identify any core roosting and foraging areas used by these species, such as the mapped wetland at McGrunder's cross (refer to www.wetlandsurveys.ie mapping). With reference to published disturbance thresholds (e.g. Cutts et al (2013) Waterbird disturbance mitigation toolkit; Goodship & Furness (2022) Disturbance Distances Review. NatureScot Research Report 1283), the applicant should then highlight any implications for the assessment of adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites.
- e) **Kingfisher:** Provide a revised assessment of any potential disturbance effects to Kingfisher during construction and operation of the project, addressing current inconsistencies between the Natura Impact Statement submitted and Terrestrial Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity assessment with regard to noise/vibration impacts, and describe any mitigation

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measures required. The assessment should be carried out with reference to disturbance triggers and thresholds for this species, and to the recently updated site-specific conservation objectives for the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area.

- f) **Badger:** Confirm the number of badger setts being lost because of the scheme, as there are inconsistent references in the Terrestrial Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity assessment. Demonstrate that the opportunities for mitigating impacts to the badger population have been maximised, including the feasibility of installing mammal passes and the provision of additional artificial setts.
- g) **Linear Woody Habitats and Drainage Ditches:** The description of woody habitat features is not considered sufficiently robust to inform adequate and area-specific planting/restoration proposals. The applicant shall provide a more detailed description of linear woody habitats, and highlight any features of significance e.g. banks, ditches, double-rows, mature hedgerow, with reference to Foulkes et al (2013) Hedgerow Appraisal System - Best Practise Guidance on Hedgerow Survey, Data Collation and Appraisal. Woodlands of Ireland, Dublin. (available at <https://www.woodlandsofireland.com/>).
- h) **Woodland:** Woodland habitat descriptions are missing from the Terrestrial Environmental Impact Assessment Report Biodiversity assessment due to a missing page. In providing the missing information on wooded habitats, the applicant should include a detailed description of the vegetation composition of the wet woodland habitat adjacent to the scheme (nearest mapped area of WN5 to the Boyne crossing on north bank) and classify this habitat with regard to the Irish Vegetation Classification system (noting crossover's with Annex I habitat), the EU Interpretation Manual for Annex I habitats, and the conservation condition criteria detailed in O'Neill et al (2013) Results of monitoring survey of old sessile oak woods and alluvial forests. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 71. (available on npws.ie).
- i) **Boyne Greenway:** One of the stated objectives of the bypass project is to facilitate greater use of the proposed Boyne Greenway (Navan to Slane). The potential for synergistic cumulative impacts therefore potentially arises from the operational stages of both developments, and cumulative effects cannot be excluded solely on the basis that the greenway will be subject to its own Appropriate Assessment requirement. Such impacts may have potential to result in adverse disturbance effects to otter and Kingfisher associated with the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation and Special Protective Area respectively. The applicant shall provide an assessment of the cumulative ecological effects of the operational stages of both developments.

Should the Board consider that additional information furnished in accordance with this request contains significant additional data in relation to the effects on the environment of the proposed road development, it will, in accordance with section 51(4A) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, require you to:

- (a) publish in one or more newspapers circulating in the area in which the proposed road development would take place a notice stating that significant additional information in relation to the said effects has been furnished to the Board, that the additional information will be available, for inspection or for purchase (on payment of a specified fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy), at a specified place and at specified times during a specified period, and that submissions or observations in relation to the additional information may be made in writing to the Board before a specified date, and

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(b) send notice of the furnishing to the Board of significant additional information, and a copy of the additional information, to the bodies and persons and the authority (where appropriate) referred to in section 51(3)(b) and (c) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, and to indicate to such bodies and persons and the authority (where appropriate) that submissions or observations in relation to the additional information may be made in writing to the Board before a specified date.

Your response to this letter should be received not later than 5.30 p.m. on the **2nd December 2024**.

In this regard, please submit 2 hard copies and one electronic copy of the above information.

If you have any queries in relation to this matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board at laps@pleanala.ie Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,



Eimear Reilly
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737184

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