

# Laois - Kilkenny Reinforcement Project Environmental Reports

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## Study Area Constraints Report - Human Beings

**Submission to:** ESB International

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## **1. Introduction**

This section identifies the constraints associated with human beings that exist in the study area as defined for the proposed Laois-Kilkenny Reinforcement Project. In terms of human beings, the types of issues which developments such as this raise (both during construction and operation) include: impacts on population; tourism; services in the area; economic opportunities and impacts on existing land uses.

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment for the lead consultant ESBI, of the constraints found within the overall project study area.

## **2. Methodology and Information Sources**

The following list of information sources were reviewed as part of the desk study:

- National Development Plan 2007-2013;
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020;
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands and South East Region 2010-2022;
- Laois County Development Plan 2006 - 2012;
- Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008 – 2014;
- Ordnance Survey Mapping and Photography;
- Central Statistics Office data;
- Fáilte Ireland and Local Tourism websites.

## **3. General Planning Background**

The study area is located primarily in the Laois and Kilkenny County Council administrative areas and at a local level is subject to the provisions of both Development Plans. At a higher level in land use planning hierarchy, the project falls within the provisions of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands and South East Region 2010-2022 and the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020.

All of the plans in the planning hierarchy support the development and reinforcement of the electricity supply network, subject to adequate protection of the environment.

## 4. Socio-Economic Factors

### 4.1 Population

#### Population Structure and Change

In terms of the County, Region and State, population structure and change is strongly influenced by migration and emigration rates, rather than birth and death rates. The mid to late 1980's in Ireland was a period of heavy population outflow, mainly due to the poor economic and employment situation. Since 1990 there has been a large movement of people into the country due to the 'economic boom' in Ireland. The subject Region has experienced fairly high levels of population growth in the past 10 years. However, recent statistics from the CSO indicate that immigration is declining and emigration is increasing throughout the country, which has resulted in net outward migration for the first time since 1995. Whilst a census is not due to be carried out until April 2011, population estimates from the CSO in April 2010 show an estimated population of 4.5 million in the Republic of Ireland ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)).

Area	1996	2002	2006	1996 – 02 % Change	2002-06 % Change
Ireland	3,626,087	3,917,203	4,239,848	8%	8.2%
SE Region	391,517	423,616	460,838	8.2%	8.7%
Midlands Region	205,542	225,363	251,664	9.6%	11.7%
Co. Laois	52,945	58,774	67,059	11%	14%
Co. Kilkenny	75,336	80,339	87,553	6.6%	8.9%
Ballyragget	803	821	1,014	2.2%	23.5%
Stradbally	1,047	1,178	1,056	12.5%	-10.3%

**Table 1 Population Structure at National, Regional and Local Level**  
[Source: ROI Census of Population 1996, 2002 and 2006]

*Table 1* above illustrates the changes in population for the State, the Midlands Region, the South East Region, at county level and locally.

The table illustrates that the population of the region grew above the national average, for the past 10 years (substantially above in the case of Co. Laois).

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government set population targets for each of the eight regional Authorities up to 2022. The *Table 2* below, illustrates the targets for the regions and the relevant counties of Laois and Kilkenny.

Area	2006	2016	2022	2006-22 % Change
Midlands Region	251,664	297,300	317,100	26%
SE Region	460,838	542,200	580,500	26%
Co. Laois	67,059	75,931	79,314	18%
Co. Kilkenny	87,558	105,598	111,903	28%

**Table 2: RPG Population targets**

[source Midlands and South East Regional Planning guidelines 2010 – 2022]

Continued population growth puts additional pressure on existing infrastructure. Effective infrastructure and in particular improvements in energy infrastructure are identified as being essential for achieving growth as described in the Regional Planning Guidelines.

## **4.2 Economic Activity**

Economic activity in the overall project study area is principally agricultural and agricultural related activities with urban related activity in Portlaoise and Kilkenny City.

The South-East has a strong base of indigenous industries such as the Headquarters of Glanbia plc. There are approximately 17,000 employees in Enterprise Ireland client companies across the region (*South-East Regional Competitiveness Agenda*, Forfás, 2009). This activity is spread throughout the region's small to medium sized towns as well as the larger urban centres. There are also many indigenous SMEs (Small to Medium Enterprises) that play a significant role in the regional economy, some of which are supported by City/County Enterprise Boards. The legacy of the former Woollen Mills has made textiles an important industry in Kilkenny and the development of crafts and design spearheaded by Kilkenny Design Workshops has resulted in a number of craft and craft related businesses. There are approx 60-70 Craft enterprises based in Kilkenny. Overseas industry is concentrated mainly in electronics and precision engineering, pharmaceuticals and healthcare and in internationally traded services such as State Street International.

Sectoral employment as a share of total employment in the South East Region may be divided as indicated in *Table 3*.

Employment Sector	% of total employment (2002)	% of total employment (2006)
Services Employment	56.9%	57%
Industrial Employment	31.5%	33%
Agricultural Employment	11.6%	10%

**Table 3 South East Employment Sector**  
[source: Regional Planning Guidelines for the South East Region 2010 - 2022]

The Midlands is home to many multinationals engaged in the healthcare, medical and pharmaceutical sectors (examples being Elan, KCI Medical, and Covidien). It is also associated with the food sector, the peat industry and energy generation. To ensure continued economic growth and to enable these towns to meet their obligations under the RPG's the provision and security of power supply is essential.

Employment Sector	% of total employment (2002)
Services Employment	59.8%
Industrial Employment	30.4%
Agricultural Employment	10.0%

**Table 4 Midlands Employment Sector**  
[source: The Irish Regions Office]

### **4.3 Tourism and Amenities**

In addition to the urban areas of Laois and Kilkenny, which have buildings and features of tourism interest, local amenities within the study area include; heritage towns, scenic landscape, scenic routes, significant tree groups, high amenity zones, outdoor activities, forestry, rivers and lakes.

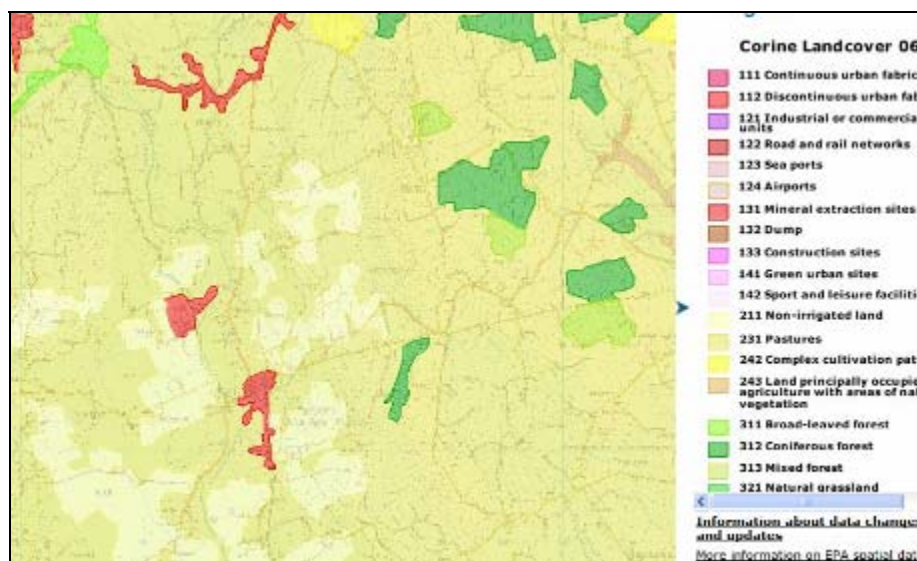
Having regard to the location of the study area, the main features of tourism in the study area include:

*The River Nore SAC, the Heritage town of Abbeyleix, the Abbeyleix Wood Complex, Views overlooking Castlecomer and Ballyragget (V12) and views towards the Slieve Bloom mountains (V19), Timahoe Round tower and Heritage gardens and parks (example Heywood Gardens).*

#### 4.4 Landuse

The study area is largely used for agriculture and associated activities that include tourism. A number of small villages occur within the study area. Abbeyleix, Durrow, Castlecomer and Stradbally are the largest settlements within the study area. There are a number of regional roads in the area; R425, R427, R430, and the R432 and motorway and national roads. In addition to this there is an extensive network of smaller interconnecting roads throughout the area.

From a review of the ENVision maps supplied by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the area comprises a mix of Pastures, Complex cultivation pattern and Broad leaved, coniferous and mixed forests as illustrated in *Figure 1* below.



**Figure 1 – Corine Land Cover Map 2006**

**(Ordnance Survey Ireland License No AR 0077410)**

#### 5. Constraints of Study Area

It is the nature of the project to pass through a region and an area. Accordingly the project will directly affect the social, economic or enterprise status of the area. The provision of a higher quality and more secure power supply to Laois/Kilkenny area will, however, have considerable positive social and economic effects on the region and the area – because it will help to support the provision of improved economic growth for the area and cater for any increase in population.

Local amenities have the potential to be impacted through visual impacts or effects on biodiversity – these impacts are considered in the relevant reports. Avoidance of major towns during detailed design as well as considering one-off house locations are also to be considered.

## **6. Conclusions**

There are no significant constraints in relation to human beings. Cognisance will be taken of the highlighted constraints during the preparation of final environmental assessment. The implementation of appropriate mitigation measures will ensure there will be no significant residual impact on the environment from the proposed development in respect to human beings. The provision of a higher quality and more secure power supply to Laois/Kilkenny area will have considerable positive social and economic effects on the region and the area – because it will help to support the provision of improved economic growth for the area and cater for the expected increase in population.