Laois - Kilkenny Reinforcement Project Environmental Reports

Study Area Constraints Report - Soils and Geology

Submission to: ESB International

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October 2010

1. Introduction

This section identifies the soils and geological constraints that exist in the study area as defined for the proposed Laois-Kilkenny reinforcement project. This report was prepared by Mr. Brian Tiernan, Environmental Consultant – AWN Consulting.

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 maps and publications, together with databases, were reviewed as part of the assessment of constraints in relation to soils and geology:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland Discovery Series 1:50,000 Map Series, Nos. 54, 55, 60 & 61
- Soil Map of Ireland, An Foras Taluntaisi, 1980
- Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)/Teagasc Soils Map, Online Map Database
- GSI, Geology of Kildare-Wicklow, Sheet 16
- GSI, Geology of Carlow Wexford, Sheet 19
- GSI, Geology of Tipperary, Sheet 18
- Karst Database, GSI
- Quaternary (Subsoils) Database, GSI
- Groundwater Well Database, GSI
- Landslides in Ireland, GSI Irish Landslides Working Group, 2006
- GSI Heritage Programme, Sites of Geological Interest

3. Soils

The soils distribution across the study area is provided on the GSI/Teagasc Soils Map and the Soils Map of Ireland. The maps identified Gleys and Grey Brown Podzolics as the distinct soil types that exists in the general area with Basin Peat found at "the pass of the planes" located along the R427, 4km southwest of Loughteeog, Ballyroan, Co. Laois, Bernardsgrove, Co. Laois and to the South of Abbeyleix, Co. Laois. Some of these areas have been harvested commercially. Peat is also found 4km east of Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny.

Gleys

Gleys are soils in which the effects of drainage impedance dominate and which have developed under the influence of permanent or intermittent water logging. The impedance may be due to a high water table, to a 'perched' water table caused by the impervious nature of the soil itself, or to seepage of runoff from slopes. Most gleys have poor physical conditions, which make them unsuitable for cultivation or for intensive grassland farming. Their productive capacity is also affected by restricted growth in spring and autumn.

Grey Brown Podzolics

These soils are generally poor soils, depleted of nutrients by heavy rainfall leaching through an organic layer (the podzolisation process). The surface layer contains organic matter that is intimately mixed with mineral matter.

Basin Peat

This was formed in lake basins, hollows and river valleys, or where the sub-soil is sufficiently impermeable to give a high water table. Variations in the concentration of component plant

remains in fen as basin peat depend on the topographic situation and nutrient content of the water supply.

4. Quaternary Geology

The study area was glaciated on at least two occasions but the majority of the sediments present today are as a result of the last glaciation, which was at its maximum some 24,000 years ago.

With reference to the EPA (http://maps.epa.ie/), the subsoils comprise of till derived from sandstones, shales and limestones of the Carboniferous Period. Till is an unsorted sediment derived from the transportation and deposition of, by, or from, a glacier. Glacial till is composed of a heterogeneous mixture of clay, sand, gravel and boulders. The following subsoil groups occur in the study area:

- Till derived chiefly from Limestone.
- Till derived chiefly from Namurian sandstones and shales
- Till derived chiefly from Devonain sandstones
- Blanket Peat
- Cut Peat
- Alluvium undifferentiated

The GSI Well Card Index is a record of wells drilled in Ireland. This Index shows a number of wells within the study area. While much useful information can be obtained from this Index, it is important to note that it is by no means exhaustive, as it requires individual drillers to submit details of wells in each area. The well card data presented in the Appendix shows the occurrence of recorded wells within the study area, information regarding the depth to bedrock, and hence the depth of overburden for each well.

The well card data shows that the wells recorded have depths of overburden varied throughout the study area where the depths to bedrock varied from ground level to 27.4m Below Ground Level (BGL).

5. Bedrock Geology

An inspection of the GSI records shows the study area to be underlain by sandstones shales and limestones of the Carboniferous Period. Different geological formations that make up the study area are the following:

- **Ballyadams Formation** Grey thick bedded crinoidal calcarenitic wackstone and packstone limestone with clay wayboards towards the top.
- **Clogrenan Formation -** Cherty argillaceous grey calcatenitic wackstone and packstone limestones.
- **Luggacurren Shale Formation -** Dark-grey to black mudstones and shales with thin bedded muddy cherts and limestones and fossiliferous marine bands.
- **Killeshin Siltstone Formation -** Grey muddy siltstones or silty mudstones with subordinate sandstone.
- Carlow Flagstone Member Fine, grey, flaggy sandstone.
- **Bregaun Flagstone Formation -** Thick bedded flaggy sandstones and siltstones.
- Moyadd Coal Formation Black shales, siltstone and occasional sandstone.
- Clay Gall Sandstone Formation Feldspathic, quartzitic sandstone.

- **Coolbaun Formation -** A cyclic repetition of shale, sandstone, seatearth and coal.
- **Swan Sandstone Member -** Laminated, dark grey fine grained siliceous sandstone.
- Durrow Formation Fossiliferous grainstones, shales and oolites with a few micrites.

6. Karst Features

The Karst database held by the GSI was consulted. This database holds records of locations and types of reported Karst features. No recorded karst features from the GSI database exist within the study area.

7. Slope Stability

In areas with sloping ground, the composition and extent of the subsoils is an influencing factor in the stability of slopes. The actual consolidation of deposits varies considerably based on a wide range of factors at a local level. Detailed information of the geotechnical capability of deposits can only be determined following intrusive site investigation.

The GSI has developed a database of historical landslides in Ireland. This database has been consulted and recorded events at the following locations within the study area:

- Maidenhead, Co. Laois (Grid Reference 264860 184130)
- Cullenagh Mountain, Co. Laois (Grid Reference 248000 189000)

8. Areas of Geological Heritage

The GSI was consulted in relation to any areas of geological heritage or interest located in the study area.

The GSI is in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to identify and select any important geological and geomorphological sites throughout the country for designation as NHAs (Natural Heritage Areas). This is addressed under 16 different geological themes. A large number of sites are currently being examined in order to identify the most significant scientifically. Sites that do not qualify as a proposed NHA, may qualify under the second tier of County Geological Sites (CGS), which would be included in County Development Plans and receive a measure of protection through inclusion in the planning system.

According to the GSI, there are 8 sites of geological interest that lie within the study area, these are as follows:

- **Lisdowney Quarry, Co. Kilkenny -** Lower Carboniferous (Brigantian) crinoid fauna. This site is proposed for NHA. Known for the important Brigantian crinoid fauna and for the blastoids Codaster acutus and Codaster sp.
- **Deer Park Mine, Co. Kilkenny -** Large disused coal mine in the Coolbaun Formation, and old mine buildings. This site is proposed for NHA.
- **Timahoe Eskers, Co. Laois -** Esker ridges. This site is proposed for CGS. The GSI has classified it as one of the best examples of esker ridges in the country showing branching and other characteristic features. A nice anatomising ridge, associated with moraine and fan features in a nice topographic setting.

- Rock of Cashel, Co. Laois deposition features, crinoids and brachiopods. This site
 is proposed for CGS. Small outcrop of limestone with characteristics of deposition in
 turbid environments. The rock is highly fossiliferous with crinoids and brachiopods.
- Flemings Fireclay Quarries (at Swan), Co. Laois Fireclays. This site is proposed for NHA.
- **Kyle Spring, Co. Laois –** spring wells. This site is proposed for NHA.
- **Moyadd Stream, Co. Laois -** Westphalian stratigraphical section. This site is proposed for NHA. This is an excellent example of the typical lithologies of the basal Coal Measures shown in this stream section. Many of the beds are fossiliferous.
- Clogh River, Co. Laois-Kilkenny Braided river channel. This site is proposed for CGS. Series of dry braided river channels are found along the tightly meandering Clogh River. Braided or transitional to braided river may be influenced by input of sediment from mining waste

9. Constraints

The key constraints in relation to soils and geology are the following:

- Sloping ground and soft ground including blanket peat there are a number of potential impacts associated with construction of structures in sloping ground, soft ground and blanket peat, in particular in the identified areas to the west of Ballyroan, Co. Laois and to the south of Abbeyleix, Co. Laois. Slope angle, accumulation of water following a high intensity rainfall event and the presence of drains in the vicinity of the construction area can lead to peat slope failure. On site machinery and dewatering activities are also contributing factors.
- Areas of made ground these areas are located at residential areas (towns and villages such as Castlecomer, Ballyragget, Timahoe and Abbeyleix). Cut material would be generated if construction was located in these areas, however the amount would not be significant.
- Areas where rock is close to the surface Rock at the surface is present in isolated locations within the study area. Bedrock would be generated as surplus material if construction was located in these areas. Due to the nature of the construction works the amount would not be significant. The surplus material would need to be managed in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996 and amendments.
- Areas of Geological Heritage 8 sites of geological interest lie within the study area. The GSI have stated that there are no set distance requirements for proposed developments in the vicinity of geological NHAs and CGSs. Distance is decided on a site by site basis. GSI has indicated that at certain geological heritage sites, excavations may contribute to further understanding of the geology. Consultation should take place with the GSI during the EIS stage to ensure that structures are located at a suitable distance.

10. Conclusions

The constraints in relation to soils and geology are highlighted in the previous section, the potential impact of the proposed development, in relation to soils and geology will be identified in the EIS. Cognisance will be taken of the highlighted constraints during the

preparation of the EIS. The implementation of appropriate mitigation measures in the EIS will ensure there will be no significant residual impact on the environment from the proposed development in respect to soils and geology.

REFERENCES

- 1. An Foras Taluntaisi, (1980), Soil Map of Ireland.
- 2. B.McConnell, M.E. Philcox, (1994), Geology of Kildare-Wicklow, Sheet 16. Geological Survey of Ireland.
- 3. D.Tietzsch-Tyler, A.G. Sleeman., (1994), Geology of Carlow-Wexford, Sheet 19. Geological Survey of Ireland.
- 4. J.B. Archer, A.G. Sleeman and D.C. Smith, (1996), Geology of Tipperary, Sheet 18. Geological Survey of Ireland.

Appendix

GSI Well Data for Study Area showing Depth To Bedrock (DTB)

GSI Code	Depth (meters)	Easting	Northing	Townland	County	DTB
2317NEW203	3.7	253240	181670	CHATSWORTH	Kilkenny	3
2317NEW204	5.6	253400	181080	CHATSWORTH	Kilkenny	2
2317NEW205	3.4	255120	181470	CHATSWORTH	Kilkenny	3.4
2317NEW209	43.3	254650	182530	CHATSWORTH	Kilkenny	18.9
2317SEW065	6.6	253250	173840	CLONBUREN	Kilkenny	2.4
2317SEW101	12.2	247850	178540	LOUGHILL	Kilkenny	11
2317SEW104	14	245880	178530	CASTLEMARKET	Kilkenny	6
2317SEW107	15	246300	178560	CASTLEMARKET	Kilkenny	14
2317SEW109	15.7	247000	178920	LOUGHILL	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW113	3.6	251360	179180	MOYHORA	Kilkenny	1
2317SEW114	7.9	252050	179320	CRUTT	Kilkenny	2
2317SEW117	5.3	253250	178830	CRUTT	Kilkenny	3
2317SEW118	4.6	253000	178140	CRUTT	Kilkenny	2
2317SEW124	24.4	254360	178420	CRUTT	Kilkenny	9.1
2317SEW130	2.3	257200	178990	TOORTANE	Kilkenny	5
2317SEW133	8.6	257750	178800	TOORTANE	Kilkenny	5
2317SEW137	10	246150	176290	BALLYOSKILL	Kilkenny	7.5
2317SEW151	4.3	247640	172250	FINNAN	Kilkenny	3.8
2317SEW152	16.5	246840	172220	FINNAN	Kilkenny	6
2317SEW160	4.3	252190	172840	DONAGUILE	Kilkenny	4
2317SEW161	25	252170	172280	DONAGUILE	Kilkenny	7
2317SEW164	26	251780	171660	CLASHDUFF UPPER	Kilkenny	7
2317SEW168	33	251000	175700	SKEHANA	Kilkenny	7
2317SEW169	52	250670	176150	SKEHANA	Kilkenny	4
2317SEW170	33	251280	176460	SKEHANA	Kilkenny	3
2317SEW172	18.2	251170	176970	SKEHANA	Kilkenny	10
2317SEW175	22	252440	177110	MOYHORA	Kilkenny	8
2317SEW176	163.1	252550	177150	MOYHORA	Kilkenny	13
2317SEW178	11.6	253770	176060	MOYHORA	Kilkenny	6.1
2317SEW187	14.3	257470	177300	CLONEEN	Kilkenny	1
2317SEW191	14.3	256570	174720	COOLBAUN	Kilkenny	3
2317SEW192	54	256790	174860	COOLBAUN	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW193	6	257880	175370	GORTEEN	Kilkenny	6
2317SEW194	28.4	258050	175520	GORTEEN	Kilkenny	10
2317SEW196	8	258310	174430	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	5
2317SEW198	6.6	258360	174130	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	2.4
2317SEW199	23.5	258400	173690	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	4
2317SEW205	18	258790	173800	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	4
2317SEW207	19.7	259880	173800	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	6
2317SEW208	24.2	259360	173370	CROGHTENCLOGH	Kilkenny	16
2317SEW209	8.5	259180	172380	COAN WEST	Kilkenny	6
2317SEW211	36.2	256280	172680	AGHAMUCKY	Kilkenny	12
2317SEW212	15.3	256140	171630	SMITHSTOWN	Kilkenny	6.1
2317SEW213	7.5	255140	172180	SMITHSTOWN	Kilkenny	1
2317SEW217	10.7	253180	171320	BALLYHIMMIN	Kilkenny	7
2317SEW222	48.8	254530	170170	KNOCKANADDOGE	Kilkenny	0.9
2317SEW227	24.8	256280	170170	USKERTY	Kilkenny	6.1
2317SEW229	49.1	259430	171070	COAN WEST	Kilkenny	22.3

GSI Code	Depth (meters)	Easting	Northing	Townland	County	DTB
2317SEW232	0.9	259610	170500	COAN EAST	Kilkenny	0.9
2317SEW234	0	256990	175180	COOLBAUN	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW235	0	256790	175020	COOLBAUN	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW236	0.7	256990	174400	COOLBAUN	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW239	0	257090	175600	MONEENROE	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW240	0	257590	175730	GORTEEN	Kilkenny	0
2317SEW249	13.1	254900	170630	KNOCKANADDOGE	Kilkenny	2.1
2317SWW413	71.4	241300	172360	SESKIN NORTH	Kilkenny	6.1
2317SWW415	63.7	242620	174820	BALLYNASLEE	Kilkenny	4.3
2317SWW416	63.7	242640	174750	BALLYNASLEE	Kilkenny	3.7
2317SWW417	20.2	243280	173100	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	8.1
2317SWW418	30.1	243630	172820	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	27.4
2317SWW420	33.5	243500	171730	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	27
2317SWW421	27.4	243580	171680	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	25.9
2317SWW423	152	243880	172040	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	4.6
2317SWW424	3.7	244870	176550	EARLSGARDEN	Kilkenny	3.7
2317SWW425	6.3	244920	176200	BALLYOSKILL	Kilkenny	4.7
2317SWW426	4	244340	175480	RUSELLSTOWN	Kilkenny	3.9
2317SWW443	61	243420	171760	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	9.4
2317SWW444	30.5	243360	171900	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	13.1
2317SWW445	30.5	243620	171970	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	14.8
2317SWW446	27.5	243280	172240	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	19.5
2317SWW447	18	243910	172310	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	12.2
2317SWW449	9.8	244000	172250	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	5
2317SWW450	68.6	243970	172240	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	5
2317SWW451	45.7	243980	172180	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	6.7
2317SWW452	5.5	243930	172050	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	3
2317SWW453	12.8	243570	171720	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	11.9
2317SWW455	61	243960	171600	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	21.5
2317SWW456	30	243730	171660	BALLYCONRA	Kilkenny	10
2317SWW464	3	241130	170770	LISDOWNEY	Kilkenny	3
2317SWW468	42.1	244800	176210	EARLSGARDEN	Kilkenny	4.9
2317NEW055	5.8	259570	183430	BALLYLEHANE UPPER	Laois	5.5
2317NEW056	2.7	259540	183370	BALLYLEHANE UPPER	Laois	0.9
2317NEW061	50.3	258880	181870	SLATT UPPER	Laois	10.7
2317NEW066	24.4	258800	181100	SLATT UPPER	Laois	7.6
2317NEW067	19.8	258420	181000	SLATT UPPER	Laois	3.7
2317NWW125	33.5	241220	187670	DERRYKEARN	Laois	9
2317NWW132	29.3	240690	189580	FOXBURROW	Laois	24.4
2317NWW136	29.3	241620	188360	DERRYKEARN	Laois	3.4
2317NWW173		240280	185120	BOLEY LOWER	Laois	9.8
2317NWW175	7	240610	185290	BOLEY LOWER	Laois	6.1
2317NWW192	122	243350	189150	CORBALLY	Laois	10.7
2317NWW193	15	243360	189100	CORBALLY	Laois	10.7
2317NWW237	28.7	241040	180820	DUNMORE	Laois	7.6
2317NWW300	20.3	242930	180150	WATERCASTLE	Laois	20.3
2317SEW017	44.2	250000	179700	KILRUSH	Laois	2.1
2317SWW058	29.3	240220	177510	CASTLEDURROW DEMESNE	Laois	0.6

GSI Code	Depth (meters)	Easting	Northing	Townland	County	DTB
2317SWW059	23.8	240200	177490	CASTLE DURROW DEMESNE	Laois	4.5
2317SWW061	21.9	240150	177450	CASTLE DURROW DEMESNE	Laois	15.6
2317SWW069	15.5	242350	178710	CASTLEWOOD	Laois	15.5
2317SWW071	23.5	242280	178300	CASTLEWOOD	Laois	3
2317SWW072	10.7	242510	177900	CASTLEWOOD	Laois	10.7
2317SWW073	2.1	243200	177770	GRENAN	Laois	2.1
2317SWW075	5.2	243410	177620	CLORHAUN	Laois	5.2
2317SWW078	4.3	243520	177280	CLORHAUN	Laois	4.3
2317SWW079	1.8	243500	177120	GRENAN	Laois	1.8
2317SWW083	22.9	243350	179540	BRANDRA	Laois	21.3
2317SWW084	28	243350	179680	BRANDRA	Laois	8.5
2317SWW085	3.7	241470	178620	COURSE	Laois	3.7
2317SWW086	4.9	240450	178600	SWAN	Laois	4.9
2317SWW089	36.9	240720	179010	DUNMORE	Laois	10.7
2317SWW103	51.8	241530	179930	DUNMORE	Laois	5.5
2317SWW104	26.7	242850	179100	FERMOYLE	Laois	8.2
2317SWW171	58	239900	172630	AHARNEY	Laois	15
2317SWW173	23	240700	174410	ARCHERSTOWN	Laois	3.1
2317SWW174	10	240800	173950	ARCHERSTOWN	Laois	10
2317SWW188	10.2	243050	175610	GRENAN	Laois	10.2
2317SWW189	37	243050	176140	GRENAN	Laois	8
2317SWW190	13.9	243000	176150	GRENAN	Laois	13.9
2317SWW212	61	240150	172300	AHARNEY	Laois	13.7
2317SWW213	63.1	239810	172870	AHARNEY	Laois	12.2
2317SWW214	64	240000	172820	AHARNEY	Laois	11
2319SEW116	22.6	256700	194610	TIMOGUE	Laois	7
2319SEW117	32.3	255970	193950	TIMOGUE	Laois	3.7
2319SEW118	29	256350	194590	TIMOGUE	Laois	17.1
2319SWW099	33.3	239570	191700	ROSKELTON	Laois	3.1
2319SWW138	12	239490	190580	BAWNAREE	Laois	10.7
2319SWW200	25	242700	194680	OLDTOWN	Laois	6.7