

## Record of Determination Annex II relevant projects

**Name of project:**  
A2 Buncrana Road Improvement Scheme

**Location** (National (Irish) Grid Reference):  
Derry City, C 43704 18779

### Qualifying criteria for Annex II relevant project:

Improvement element of project is >1ha	✓
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Project is located within or partially within 'sensitive' area	✗
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Other with potential for significant effect (e.g. adjacent to sensitive site)	✓
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#### A. Description of the Proposed Scheme:

##### The Proposed Scheme (2021)

As part of the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (2015), the A2 Buncrana Road is identified as a major highway scheme which requires road widening between: Pennyburn to Skeoge Link; and Skeoge Link to the Republic of Ireland (RoI) Border. The Proposed Scheme follows the preferred route identified in Stage 2 SAR and comprises 4.4km of dual carriageway along the A2 Buncrana Road between Pennyburn Roundabout and the RoI Border (Appendix A). The total area of the preferred route is approximately 40 hectares.

The key works will include the upgrade of a number of existing junctions and the implementation of a new junction strategy to provide a dual carriageway with raised central reserve along the entire route. The works will also include minor side road realignment and upgraded pedestrian and cycling facilities. In order to improve road safety and reduce traffic congestion through simplified vehicle movements, right turning manoeuvres to and from private accesses, side roads and retail developments on to the A2 Buncrana Road will be prohibited. The provision of strategically located all-movement roundabout junctions along the A2 Buncrana Road will provide a means for motorists to access their desired location through a short diversionary route.

##### Design development of preferred route (2007 – 2019)

The Stage 1 Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) dated September 2007 and the Addendum dated March 2008 reported on the five corridor options and identified the preferred route corridor for A2 Buncrana Road. The conclusions of the Stage 1 report recommended taking forward the Red, Blue, Purple and Navy Routes to Stage 2 assessment; the Brown Route was not to be considered further because it did not offer any significant advantages over the other options and was the option least favoured during consultation.

In December 2008, a Stage 2 SAR was published by the Department for Regional Development. The Stage 2 SAR was produced in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 5 and the Environmental Assessment in accordance with DMRB Volume 11. The Stage 2 Environmental Assessment concluded that there are no significant un-mitigatable environmental impacts identified for any of the route options. The Stage 2 SAR identified the preferred route as:

- Pennyburn Junction to Skeoge Link: Red Route.
- Skeoge Link to the RoI Border: Navy Route.

Given the passage of time between the publication of the Stage 2 SAR in 2008, a review of the Stage 2 SAR report was undertaken in 2019, which took into consideration updated traffic surveys data and the updated junction strategy. The findings of this report concluded that the red and navy routes, as identified in the Stage 2 SAR in 2008, were still the preferred routes.

## **B. Description of local environment, including statutory and non-statutory designations:**

### **The local environment**

The Proposed Scheme is located in the North West of Northern Ireland and extends from the Pennyburn Roundabout in Derry City to the Rol Border. The Proposed Scheme is both urban and rural in nature. The urban section includes residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and educational areas and includes religious centres. The rural section includes a significant area zoned for residential and industrial development (identified within the Derry Area Plan 2011) and includes existing residential, industrial and agricultural land.

The local environment is dominated by the existing A2 Bunrana Road which is a single lane carriageway with footpaths on both sides and street lighting along the majority of the road. The existing major junctions are predominantly in the form of four and five arm roundabouts, with one traffic signalised junction at Racecourse Road. Intermediate junctions include priority junctions or priority junctions with a right turn lane which provide access to residential areas and other community facilities along the urban section.

### **Statutory and non-statutory designations**

#### **Geology and Land Quality:**

There are a number of known (previous and existing) sources of contamination within the urban section including a petrol filling station and industrial estates located within and adjacent to the existing A2 Bunrana Road. There are no known geological sites of interest within the Proposed Scheme.

#### **Water Environment:**

Watercourses within the Proposed Scheme include the Skeoge River and a number of unnamed drainage channels. The Pennyburn Stream, to the east of the Proposed Scheme is culverted over much of its length in the vicinity of Bunrana Road. Many of the waterbodies are tributaries of the River Foyle which is located east of the Proposed Scheme. The tidally influenced River Foyle flows in a north easterly direction along the eastern boundary of the site. The River Foyle is a 'designated watercourse' under the terms of the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 and as such is subject to regular maintenance by the Rivers Agency. The River Foyle is also designated as sensitive under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) and the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC).

The Skeoge River and the River Foyle are classified under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC. The Skeoge River (WFD Code: UKGBNI1NW393901002) is classified as a Heavily Modified Water Body (HMWB) for its entire length and is currently described as having Poor Ecological Potential. The Upper Foyle (WFD Code: UKGBNI5NW250030) has Moderate Ecological Potential with an objective to achieve Good by 2027.

Sections of the Proposed Scheme are located within both fluvial (from rivers) and pluvial (from overland surface water runoff) floodplains. The flood hazard (present day) varies across the Proposed Scheme and the surrounding areas depending on the floodplain and interaction with watercourses:

- Fluvial Flood Hazard: sections of the Proposed Scheme are located within the 1 in 100-year flood extent and the 1 in 1000-year or greater flood extent.
- Pluvial Flood Hazard: sections of the Proposed Scheme are located within the 1 in 30-year flood extent, 1 in 200-year flood extent and 1 in 1000-year or greater flood extent.

#### **Nature Conservation:**

There are no statutory designated ecological sites located within the Proposed Scheme. There are a number of internationally and nationally designated sites within 15km of the Proposed Scheme which are located in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (Rol). The following site are International designated sites

located within 5km:

- Lough Swilly Special Protection Area (SPA) (RoI): located approximately 2km north-west and designated for its assemblage of wintering bird species.
- Lough Swilly Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (RoI): located approximately 5km north-west and designated for its special habitats. Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are also a qualifying species.
- River Faughan and Tributaries SAC: located approximately 3.6km east is primarily designated due to Atlantic Salmon populations. Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are also a qualifying species.
- Lough Foyle Ramsar site (NI) and SPA (RoI): located approximately 5.3km east and 6.5km north is designated for its assemblage of wintering bird species and a good example of a wetland.

Lough Foyle, the River Foyle and Tributaries, and the River Faughan and Tributaries are NI designated Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). Lough Swilly and Big Isle are located in RoI and are proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA). Protected species along the preferred route corridor include bats (various), Badgers (*Meles meles*), Otters (*Lutra lutra*), Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulagris*) and birds (various).

#### **Landscape:**

The Proposed Scheme is located within Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Area 6: Foyle Valley and within Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (2000) Area 32: Derry Slopes. The landscape along the A2 Buncrana Road from the River Foyle to the RoI Border forms part of the Derry Slopes (LCA) which is identified under the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (2000). The landscape is dominated by the city, with a fragmented landscape character; fields and farms are surrounded by housing estates and commercial units.

#### **Cultural Heritage:**

There are no World Heritage Sites within 1km of the Proposed Scheme. There is one Scheduled Monument within the Proposed Scheme called the Inauguration Stone (St Columb's Stone) at Belmont House Special School. Within 1km of the Proposed Scheme there is one Scheduled Monument and Battlefield boundary at Castle Aileach on Upper Galliagh Road which dates to the 14th century. There is a total of 11 historic/listed buildings or buildings with listed status located within 500m of the Proposed Scheme. There are two records of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demenses within the study area including Glengalliagh Hall and Belmont House. There are approximately 15 archaeological sites and monuments as recorded by Site and Monument Record data within 500m of the Proposed Scheme. In addition, there are 14 records of Industrial Heritage Resources from the IHR within 500m of the Proposed Scheme which relate to the industrial development of the area in the post-medieval period.

#### **Air Quality:**

Within Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) there are four existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), three of which are located within 2km of the Proposed Scheme and one located within the footprint of the Proposed Scheme, known as Buncrana Road/Racecourse Road AQMA.

#### **Noise:**

There are no statutory designated noise protection areas within the Proposed Scheme. As would be expected in the vicinity of a busy main road, the noise character of the site is considered to be relatively high, particularly at peak times of the day.

### **C. Summary of key potential environmental impacts:**

#### **Geology and Land Quality, Road Drainage and Water Environment:**

Construction activities have the potential to impact on contaminated soils which may have indirect adverse impacts on water quality and human health. During operation, the Proposed Scheme may impact on the drainage and water quality flowing into watercourses and ground water. These impacts have the potential to be significant and will require EIA. The widening of the existing highway infrastructure may impact on known floodplains and flood storage areas adjacent to the site. The Proposed Scheme has the potential to

significantly increase the flood hazard upstream of the site. Mitigation measures will be considered during the EIA process and may include best practice construction measures and appropriate drainage design measures.

#### **Nature Conservation:**

It is likely that construction and site clearance will impact directly on ecological habitats including the removal of roadside trees and hedgerows. Habitats within the Proposed Scheme have the potential to support project species and therefore construction activities may have significant adverse impacts on protected species. During operation, the Proposed Scheme may adversely impact on the connectivity of habitats. Detailed baseline surveys will be undertaken as part of the EIA to understand the presence of protected species. Baseline surveys will help to inform appropriate mitigation measures which may include appropriate landscaping.

The Proposed Scheme is connected (hydrologically and through air quality) with a number of international and nationally designated sites. A Stage 1 Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening was undertaken in accordance with EU Habitats Directive. The findings of the Stage 1 HRA Screening has determined that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the HRA is required.

#### **Landscape:**

Impacts on landscape during construction are likely to be adverse, however these adverse impacts are likely to be temporary. The Proposed Scheme does not include any grade separated junctions or structures. During opening year of the Proposed Scheme, impacts on landscape are likely to be significant within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Scheme due to the widening of the existing highway and the removal of any visual screening. The significance of impacts on landscape may change as the landscaping strategy grows and develops. Impacts on landscape will vary across the Proposed Scheme and the EIA will need to consider impacts on townscape and the impacts on the rural landscape between Skeoge Roundabout and the Rol Border.

#### **Cultural Heritage:**

The preferred route follows the existing A2 Buncrana Road corridor and any archaeological remains are likely to be already disturbed. However, construction activities have the potential to directly impact on unknown archaeological and industrial heritage adjacent to the site. Operational impacts are likely to be indirect and the EIA will consider the significance of impacts on setting of heritage assets. Mitigation measures will be considered in the EIA and are likely to be incorporated within the landscape design.

#### **Noise & Air Quality:**

Due to the urban setting of the Proposed Scheme there are likely to be a number of air quality and noise impacts on properties along the Proposed Scheme including education and residential properties. There are a number of residential and commercial properties which will be demolished during the construction period which will have large but short-term impact on air quality and noise. During operation, the Proposed Scheme has the potential to significantly impact sensitive receptors. Given that there is an existing AQMA within the scheme footprint, even a small change in air quality may be considered significant. Therefore, the EIA will consider the operational noise and air quality impacts.

#### **Impacts on Community:**

The Proposed Scheme will directly impact on a number of residential and commercial properties, some of which will require demolition. The latest design of the preferred route includes a central reserve and prohibiting right hand manoeuvres into and out of minor and intermediate junctions. These impacts may have a significant effect on the local community through severance and access to local community facilities. The EIA will consider the impacts on communities, vehicle drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

#### **Transboundary Impacts:**

Given that the Proposed Scheme will end at the Rol Border, there is a potential for environmental impacts to occur in County Donegal. Transboundary impacts are likely to be associated with transport related impacts

(i.e. air quality and noise) and impacts on designated sites which are connected hydrologically with watercourses which flow through the preferred route corridor. Furthermore, air quality Impacts have the potential to impact on designated sites. The EIA process will identify appropriate design and mitigation measures to reduce and avoid transboundary impacts.

**D. Details of extent of environmental impact assessment work undertaken and summary of any consultation undertaken with the statutory consultation bodies**

Stage 1 and Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Reports and Environmental Assessments have been undertaken during 2007 and 2008 in accordance with DMRB. The Stage 1 assessment outlined the proposed study area, possible corridors and highlighted topic-specific methodologies to be used for future assessment. The Stage 2 Environmental Assessment considered various route options and concluded that all route options could be progressed through further detailed design.

Throughout the scheme design a number of non-statutory consultation events have been undertaken:

- Stage 1 Scheme Assessment, Community Consultation Days was held in April 2007;
- Stage 2 Scheme Assessment, Public Exhibition was held in April 2008;
- The Minister for Regional Development, Conor Murphy announced the Red Route as the 'Preferred Route' on the 10th February 2009.
- Details of the emerging design and the revised junction strategy were presented to the public for comment at a Public Information Exhibition on Tuesday 8th May 2018 and on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

As part of the EIA Process, EIA Scoping represents the first stage of formal consultation with statutory bodies. Throughout the EIA, Environmental Liaison Group meetings will be set up with Statutory Stakeholders as part of the Stage 3 design.

**E. Determination decision, statement of case in support if this decision:**

In accordance with The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (Part V) as amended by Roads (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 (hereafter, the "EIA Regulations") the Proposed Scheme requires an EIA.

The EIA Regulations are transposed from European Council Directive 2014/52/EU (hereafter "the EIA Directive"), and the Proposed Scheme is considered as falling under Annex II Category 10 as an Infrastructure project (d) construction of roads. In this context and due to the potential significant impacts identified within this report, an EIA will be undertaken and an EIA Report will be produced as part of the Proposed Scheme.

**File references of supporting documentation for future reference:**

- Faber Maunsell (January 2008): North Western Key Transport Corridor Improvements - Stage 1 Environmental Assessment Report (Ref 49675 IBLE).
- Faber Maunsell (December 2008): A2 Buncrana Road Stage 2 DMRB Environmental Assessment (Ref 60033968).

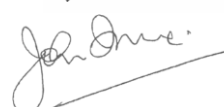
**I have determined that a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this project.**

Signature Project Manager / Project Sponsor:



Dated: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Authorisation to publish Notice of Determination.



Signature Director of Major Projects and Procurement:

Dated: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021