



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP0873 Dunstown-Moneypoint 400 kV Refurbishment Project: Emergency Non-Intrusive Works [Exempted Development] Counties Clare and Limerick

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended ('the Regulations'), EirGrid has undertaken Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of relevant European sites, if CP0873 Dunstown-Moneypoint 400 kV Refurbishment Project: Emergency Non-Intrusive Works [Exempted Development] Counties Clare and Limerick ('the Development'), individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will result in likely significant effects on a European site(s).

The Development comprises the following non-intrusive works on all towers from 341 to 577 inclusive (but **excludes** any non-intrusive works at towers 368, 369, 409, 410, 472 and 473):

- Painting of towers;
- Replacement of steel members;
- Replacement of tower and step bolts;
- Fit / repair anti-climbing guards;
- Replacement of line identification and danger notices;
- Replacement of insulator assemblies and hardware
- Replacement of vibrating dampers
- Replacement of all ring spaces and spacer dampers at all span locations; and,
- Replacement of earthwire hardware and fittings.

The Development adjoins, and/or crosses numerous watercourses (generally drainage ditches). Many watercourses are hydrologically connected to the Lower River Shannon SAC and/or River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

Ecological walkover surveys were completed on a total of 22 dates between August 2021 and June 2026 inclusive¹.

The Development is entirely non-intrusive, involving no breaking of ground.

Relevant European sites

The most relevant European sites to the Development are the:

- Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC; site code 2165; NPWS, 2012²([OBJ](#))) noting that within the Development, towers 370 and 533 are adjacent to the SAC. Additionally, a number of waterbodies in proximity to towers are hydrologically-linked to the SAC.
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA; site code 4077³) noting that mobile ex-site bird populations from this SPA can occur outside the

¹ Ecological walkovers were undertaken in August 2021 (23rd - 27th, 30th - 31st), September 2021 (1st - 3rd), October 2021 (6th and 14th), January 2023 (23rd - 26th), March 14th 2023, January 2026 (19th - 23rd and 26th - 30th) and 2nd June 2026.

² NPWS (2012a) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³ NPWS (2012b) Conservation Objectives: River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

designated site boundary, and that again, a number of waterbodies in proximity to towers are hydrologically-linked to the SPA.

- Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC (site code: 000030; NPWS, 2018⁴) is 550m from the Development at the closest point. A section of the Development is within the 2.5km foraging extent for lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* which is a Qualifying Interest (QI) species of the SAC.
- Kilkishen House SAC (site code: 002319; NPWS, 2018⁵) is 1.3km from the Development at the closest point. A section of the Development is within the 2.5km foraging extent for lesser horseshoe bat which is a QI species of the SAC.
- Knockanira House SAC (site code: 002318; NPWS, 2018⁶) is 1.3km from the Development at the closest point. A section of the Development is within the 2.5km foraging extent for lesser horseshoe bat which is a QI species of the SAC.
- Poulmagordon Cave (Quin) SAC (site code: 000064; NPWS, 2018⁷) is 1.4km from the Development at the closest point. A section of the Development is within the 2.5km foraging extent for lesser horseshoe bat which is a QI species of the SAC.
- Newhall and Edenvale Complex SAC (site code: 000064; NPWS, 2018⁸) is 1.7km from the Development at the closest point. A section of the Development is partially within the 2.5km foraging extent for lesser horseshoe bat which is a QI species of the SAC.

The Development is entirely non-intrusive, involving no breaking of ground.

As previously discussed, two towers (370 and 533) within the Development are adjacent to Lower River Shannon SAC. Several waterbodies in proximity to towers are hydrologically linked to the SAC and to River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA. Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC, Kilkishen House SAC, Knockanira House SAC, Poulmagordon Cave (Quin) SAC and Newhall and Edenvale Complex SAC are all within 2.5km of the Development.

Ecological surveys have confirmed there are no QI otter *Lutra lutra* breeding or resting sites, nor invasive species within the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the Development.

The outage for this emergency works will be in the summer months, when there will be no wintering of Special Conservation Interest (SCI) birds of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

Crucially, all works are entirely non-intrusive, involving no breaking of ground. All watercourse crossings with hydrological connectivity to European sites will be crossed with temporary clear span watercourse crossing structures to access structure locations. The purpose of these crossing structures is to avoid damage to agricultural land and ensure timely access of structures by tracked and/or wheeled machines. Watercourse crossing methods are not measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on European sites.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

There are no European sites within the Development so no possibility for direct effects to Annex I habitats from the Development. Habitats (both groundwater and surface water-dependent) may still be indirectly affected at distance by pollution or changes to surface or

⁴ NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC 000030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

⁵ NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Kilkishen House SAC 002319. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁶NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Knockanira House SAC 002318. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

⁷ NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Poulmagordon Cave (Quin) SAC 000064. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁸

NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Newhall and Edenvale Complex SAC 002091. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

groundwater yield or flow. However, there are no groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems within the Zol so no potential for likely significant effects. There is no potential for likely significant effects on surface-water dependent habitats (including for instance, QI watercourses of plane to montane levels of the Lower River Shannon SAC) or surface-water dependent species (including for instance QI Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* or lamprey of the of the Lower River Shannon SAC) because there will be no breaking of ground, no instream works, and no storage of oils, fuels or other contaminants at tower locations.

Otter is a mobile QI species of the Lower River Shannon SAC which can occur in functionally-linked habitat beyond the SAC boundary. Ecological walkover surveys on a total of 22 dates between August 2021 and June 2026 inclusive have identified no otter holts within the Zol of the Development. The works are scheduled to be completed in 2026, within the validity period for the June 2026 surveys.

The works associated with the Development will be temporary and will only take place in any one location for a short period of time. The works are also relatively minor in nature (not involving breaking of ground or instream works), and not substantially different to routine agricultural activities that may occur in proximity to the Development. The works will be carried out in summer, when (wintering) SCI populations of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA are absent.

There are no other European sites nearby or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the relevant European site's Conservation Objectives.

AA Screening Statement

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, EirGrid has made a Determination following Screening that an Appropriate Assessment is not required, as the project individually or in-combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded on the basis of objective evidence.

This Determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the Development, including temporary works, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



Robert Fennelly CEcol MCIEEM

23 June 2026