



## **Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination**

### **CP1125 Physical Security of Transmission Stations - Central Region - 110kV [Exempted Development] Counties Kildare 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 the CP1125 Physical Security of Transmission Stations - Central Region [Exempted Development] ('the Development') individually or in-combination with other plans or projects will result in Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on a European site(s).

The Development comprises works at two transmission stations, Blake and Rathkeale 110kV Stations. Chain-link fencing of 170m at Blake and 410m at Rathkeale will be replaced with palisade fencing of similar height. All works are to be carried out entirely within the boundaries of the energised substations.

#### **Analysis of Pathways to European sites - Blake Substation**

The nearest European site to the Blake 110kV Substation is the Ballynafagh Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>1</sup>, approximately 4.7km from its boundary. Owing to the Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the site (i.e. alkaline fens, Desmoulin's whorl snail and marsh fritillary), its primary sensitivities relate to water pollution, changes in hydrological regime and loss of functionally linked habitats outside the designated site boundary.

Any potential negative impacts on the water environment in the Ballynafagh Lake SAC are excluded based on the limited scale and duration of the works, as well as the hydrological setting surrounding Blake Substation. In addition to being relatively remote from any surface waterbodies, the substation also lies in an area that is downstream in the River Slate catchment. Therefore, there is no potential for negative interactions with alkaline fens, Desmoulin's whorl snail and marsh fritillary via impacts on water quality and/or flow. A lack of hydrological connectivity would also prevent any negative hydrological effects on the QIs of the Ballynafagh Bog SAC<sup>2</sup>, approximately 5.8km from the Development.

Potential impacts on QIs reproducing or foraging in habitats that are functionally linked to European sites was also excluded following consideration of the works involved and appraisal of the habitat requirements of relevant species. While foraging marsh fritillary have maximum foraging distances of well over 4.7km, the Development will be limited to the existing substation boundary, an area which does not support vegetation (including devil's-bit scabious, the food source of the butterfly). Therefore, the substation boundary is generally unsuitable as foraging habitat for butterflies.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the development via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in LSEs in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

#### **Analysis of Pathways to European sites - Rathkeale Substation**

The closest European site to the Rathkeale 110kV Substation is the Askeaton Fen Complex SAC<sup>3</sup>, approximately 2.2km to the north-east of the station boundary. It is designated for calcareous

---

<sup>1</sup> NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Ballynafagh Lake SAC 001387. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>2</sup> NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ballynafagh Bog SAC 000391. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>3</sup> NPWS (2018) Conservation Objectives: Askeaton Fen Complex SAC 002279. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae* and alkaline fens, making it particularly susceptible to changes in water quality and hydrological regime.

In addition to being relatively distant from any surface watercourses (the River Deel (Newcastlewest) being the closest one, approximately 440m away), Rathkeale Substation lies in a catchment that is not in direct hydrological continuity with the Askeaton Fen Complex SAC. Fence replacements will not lead to likely significant water quality impacts, and the SAC is also located far beyond the potential impact zone for construction-related dust deposition. The risk of impacts on Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species roosting, foraging, or nesting away from European sites is also excluded, following an appraisal of available evidence on foraging ecology. At an approximate distance of 8.1km to Rathkeale Substation, the Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle Special Protection Area (SPA)<sup>4</sup> lies far beyond the reported off-site foraging distance for hen harrier, the only SCI of this European site.

#### 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 LSEs 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 the temporary nature of works, and has not taken account of mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



---

Robert Fennelly CEcol MCIEEM Lead Senior Ecologist

28 June 2023

---

<sup>4</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA 004161. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.