



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1182 Transformer Restoration Project [Exempted Development]

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 CP1182 Transformer Restoration Project [Exempted Development] ('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 restoration of fourteen transformers to repair corrosion at various substations. All works are to be carried out entirely within the substation boundaries.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

Woodland 400kV Station

The nearest European site to Woodland 400kV Station is Ballynafagh Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 001387)¹ which is 28km away with no hydrological link or ecological pathway connecting Woodland 400kV Station to the SAC. The closest Special Protection Area (SPA) to the Development is Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 004025)² which is 24km away with no hydrological link or ecological pathway linking the substation to the SPA. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to Woodland 400kV Station via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Maynooth 220kV Station

The nearest European site to Maynooth 220kV Station is Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (site code 001398)³ which is 4.7km distant, with no hydrological link or ecological pathway linking the substation to the SAC. The closest SPA to the substation is Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA⁴ (site code 004063) which is 19.7km away from the substation boundary. Owing to the Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of the site, its primary sensitivities relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat and noise and visual disturbance. The Development lies within the maximum foraging distance of 15-20km reported for greylag goose *Anser anser*⁵, an SCI species of this SPA. Notwithstanding this, all works will be carried out within the existing substation boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no habitats that are suitable for foraging / loafing SCI greylag goose. Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, the other SCI species, are habitat generalists for which loss of functionally-linked habitat is not a primary concern. At 19.7km distance, the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA lies beyond the impact buffer zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the relatively minor nature of the works means that any noise disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development will be immaterial.

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

² NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Malahide Estuary SPA 004025. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³ NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC 001398. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁴ NPWS (2024) Conservation objectives: Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA [004063]. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁵ Scottish Natural Heritage (June 2016) Assessing connectivity with Special protection Areas (SPAs) Guidance. 4pp.

Other than the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, there are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Shannonbridge 220kV Station

Shannonbridge 220kV Station is adjacent to River Shannon Callows SAC (site code 000216)⁶ and Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 004096)⁷ and is hydrologically linked via the Island Banragh 25 waterbody. The substation is also hydrologically linked 31km downstream through Island Banragh 25 waterbody to Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC (site code 002241)⁸ and Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (site code 004058)⁹. All Saints Bog SPA is 12km from the substation. Owing to the SCIs of the site, its primary sensitivities relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat, noise and visual disturbance.

All works are within the existing substation boundary which consists of hardstanding, thus if there is a spillage of pollutants then this will be confined to hardstanding areas of the substation, thus no potential for pollution entering the Island Banragh 25 waterbody and entering European sites downstream. SCI species which may occur within proximity of the substation will be already habituated to existing levels of disturbance from operational noise within the substation. There will be no loss of functionally-linked habitat for SCI bird species as the substation comprises hardstanding and there are plentiful other habitats in the surrounding area which SCI species could utilise. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Aghada 220kV Station

Aghada 220kV Station is adjacent to Cork Harbour SPA (site code 004030)¹⁰ which is designated for a variety of wetland and waterbirds. The substation is 4.8km from Great Island Channel SAC (site code 001058)¹¹ and is 13.2km to Ballycotton Bay SPA (site code 004022)¹². All works are within the existing substation boundary which consists of hardstanding, thus if there is a spillage of pollutants then this will be confined to hardstanding areas of the substation and there is no potential for pollution entering Cork Harbour and affecting SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA or Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats / species of Great Island Channel SAC. SCI species which may occur within proximity of the substation will be already habituated to existing levels of disturbance from operational activities within the substation. There will be no loss of functionally-linked habitat for SCI bird species as the substation comprises hardstanding and there are plentiful other habitats in the surrounding area which SCI species could utilise. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Cashla 220kV Station

There are no waterbodies within or in proximity to Cashla 220kV Station, thus no hydrological connectivity to any European sites. The closest European site to the substation is Lough Corrib

⁶ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: River Shannon Callows SAC 000216. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁷ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Middle Shannon Callows SPA 004096. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁸ NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC 002241. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁹ NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA [004058]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹⁰ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹¹ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹² NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

SAC (site code 000297)¹³ which is 3.8km from the substation with no hydrological connectivity between the SAC and the substation. Although the SAC is designated for lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, the substation site consists of hardstanding habitats which are unsuitable for foraging bats. The substation is also outside the core sustenance zone for the species¹⁴.

The closest SPA to the substation is Inner Galway Bay SPA which is 6.5km from the substation. Other European sites identified to be within the potential Zol of the Development are Cregganna Marsh SPA (site code 004142)¹⁵, Lough Corrib SPA (site code 004042)¹⁶, Rahasane Turlough SPA (site code 004089)¹⁷ and Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA (site code 004168)¹⁸. The primary sensitivities of the SCI species of these SPAs relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat and noise and visual disturbance. However, there will be no loss of functionally-linked habitat for SCI bird species as the substation comprises hardstanding and there are plentiful other habitats in the surrounding area which SCI species could utilise. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Louth 220kV Station

There are no waterbodies within or in proximity to Louth 220kV Station, thus no hydrological connectivity to any European sites. The closest European site to the substation is Dundalk Bay SPA (site code 004026)¹⁹ which is 11.8km from the substation. There are no other SPAs within 20km of the substation. The primary sensitivities of the SCI species of Dundalk Bay SPA relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat and noise and visual disturbance. However, there will be no loss of functionally-linked habitat for SCI bird species as the substation comprises hardstanding and there are plentiful other habitats in the surrounding area which SCI species could utilise. The closest SAC to the substation is Dundalk Bay SAC (site code 000455)²⁰ which is 12.2km away. There is no hydrological link or possible ecological pathway between the substation and the SAC. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site Conservation Objectives.

Kellis 220kV Station

There are no waterbodies within or in proximity to Kellis 220kV Station. The closest European site to the substation is Slaney River Valley SAC (site code 000781) which is 4.9km east of the substation. There is no hydrological link or possible ecological pathway between the substation and the SAC.

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

Cullenagh 220kV Station

There are no waterbodies within or in proximity to Cullenagh 220kV Station, thus no hydrological connectivity to any European sites. The closest European site to the substation is Lower River

¹³ NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lough Corrib SAC 000297. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

¹⁴ Bat Conservation Trust (2020). Core Sustenance Zones and habitats of importance for designing Biodiversity Net Gain for bats.

¹⁵ NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Cregganna Marsh SPA 004142. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

¹⁶ NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Lough Corrib SPA 004042. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹⁷ NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: Rahasane Turlough SPA 004089. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹⁸ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA 004168. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹⁹ NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Dundalk Bay SPA 004026. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

²⁰ NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Dundalk Bay SAC 000455. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Suir SAC (site code 002137)²¹ which is 1.5km from the substation. There is no hydrological link or possible ecological pathway between the substation and the SAC. Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (sitecode 004193)²² is 11.8km from the substation while Tramore Back Strand SPA (site code 004027)²³ is 12.8km from the substation. There are no other SPAs within 20 km of the substation. The primary sensitivities of SCI species of Mid-Waterford Coast SPA and Tramore Back Strand SPA relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat and noise and visual disturbance. However, there will be no loss of functionally-linked habitat for SCI bird species as the Substation comprises hardstanding and there are plentiful other habitats in the surrounding area which SCI species could utilise.

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

Clashavoon 220kV Station

The closest European site to the Clashavoon 220kV Station is Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA (site code 004162)²⁴, which is approximately 5.4km away ('as the crow flies'). The SPA is designated for hen harrier, which have a core foraging range of 2km⁵. The Clashavoon 220kV Station is therefore located well beyond the core foraging range of the SCI, and there is therefore no potential for any likely significant effects from disturbance of foraging birds using functionally-linked habitat. The only other SPA located within 20km of the substation is The Gearagh SPA (site code 004109)²⁵, located approximately 6.7km away, and whose SCI species are wintering waterbirds not strongly reliant on off-site foraging grounds. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the Development.

The Laney_040²⁶ waterbody flows adjacent to the western boundary of the substation. River Lee Reservoir is located approximately 7km downstream of the station. The Gearagh SAC (site code 000108)²⁷ and The Gearagh SPA are connected to the River Lee Reservoir, although the European sites are downstream of Lee_Cork_050 and not Laney_040. There is therefore no mechanism by which pollution could reach the SAC and SPA. However, otter are QI species of The Gearagh SAC and have large home ranges in Ireland (approximately 6.5-13.2km)²⁸ and therefore may use functionally-linked watercourses outside of the SAC, including Laney_040. However, given the minor works involved, with all works within the existing substation boundary which consists of hardstanding, there is limited likelihood of pollution entering the Laney_040 watercourse and any functionally-linked habitat. Furthermore, given the minor and temporary works involved, there is no potential for likely significant effects related to visual and noise disturbance of otter.

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

Gorman 220kV Station

²¹ NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

²² NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Mid-Waterford Coast SPA [004193]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

²³ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Tramore Back Strand SPA 004027. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

²⁴ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA 004162. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

²⁵ NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives for the Gearagh SPA [004109]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

²⁶ Environmental protection Agency (EPA) maps website <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> (accessed 22 January 2025).

²⁷ NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: The Gearagh SAC 000108. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

²⁸ Reid, N., Hayden, B., Lundy, M.G., Pietravalle, S., McDonald, R.A. and Montgomery, W.I. (2013). National Otter Survey of Ireland 2010/12. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 6. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

The closest European sites to the Gorman 220kV Station are River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299)²⁹, and River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232)³⁰, both located approximately 2.6km away ('as the crow flies'). The SAC is designated for QI otter, salmon *Salmo salar* a range of Annex I habitats, and the SPA is designated for the SCI species kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. The Boyne_160²⁶ stream lies adjacent to the to the southern boundary of the substation and flows into the SAC and SPA downstream at a hydrological distance of approximately 3km and 3.2km, respectively. However, should a pollution event occur, then there would be dilution due to the intervening distance. Furthermore, the minor works will occur within the existing substation boundary, which limits the likelihood of pollution reaching any watercourse, as any spillage of pollutants would be contained on the hardstanding areas of the substation. There is therefore no potential for likely significant effects on the SAC or SPA regarding water quality.

Given the minor and temporary works involved, there is no potential for likely significant effects related to visual and noise disturbance of mobile QIs and SCI species, should they be present along the Boyne_160 stream.

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

Srananagh 220kV Station

The closest European site to the Srananagh 220kV Station is Unshin River SAC (site code 001898³¹), located approximately 4.4km away. The SAC is designated for a range of Annex I habitats, otter and salmon. The nearest waterbody to the Development is a drain located approximately 125 m west of the substation, identified on Tailte Éireann PRIME2 Watercourses layer. This unnamed drain is hydrologically linked to Unshin_040²⁶ watercourse, which flows into the SAC approximately 6.8km downstream. However, given the minor and temporary works involved, and the distance between the substation to the drain, there is no potential for likely significant effects on the SAC regarding water quality.

Ballysadare Bay SPA (site code 004129)³² and Cumeen Strand SPA (site code 004035³³), located approximately 8.9km and 12.4km away from the substation, respectively, are designated for the mobile SCI species light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* that may occur in functionally-linked habitats beyond the designated site boundary⁵. However, all works will be carried out within the existing substation boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no suitable habitat for foraging SCI light-bellied brent goose. Moreover, the substation is surrounded by fields which appear to consist of scrub habitat, and are unlikely to offer suitable foraging opportunities for light-bellied brent goose. There is an extensive resource of suitable agricultural fields much closer to the SPAs. This, combined with the relatively minor nature of the works, mean that any noise disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA boundary but in the vicinity of the Development will be immaterial. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the Development.

There are other SPAs located within 20km of the substation, however, the substation is either located beyond the core foraging ranges of the SCI species, or the SCI species use habitats that are not present near to the Development (coastal habitats and areas of open freshwater, such as loughs). Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects on mobile SCI associated with these European sites as a result of the Development.

²⁹ NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC 002299. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

³⁰ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SOA 004232. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

³¹ NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Unshin River SAC 001898. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

³² NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SPA 004129. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³³ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Cumeen Strand SPA 004035. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the applicable site 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 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

10 February 2025