



## **Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination**

### **CP1250 Sprecher and Schuh CB Replacements [Exempted Development] (Counties Cork, Waterford, Kildare, Kerry 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 CP1250 Sprecher and Schuh CB Replacements [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 relates to the following stations (all works are to be contained within each station and no works will occur outside of the stations):

1. Macroom 110kV
2. Dungarvan 110kV
3. Griffinrath 110kV
4. Knockearagh 110kV
5. Mallow 110kV
6. Newbridge 220kV
7. Tralee 110kV
8. Aughinish 110kV
9. Blake 110kV

The Development comprises the replacement of Sprecher and Schuh model of circuit breakers.

### **Analysis of Pathways to European Sites**

#### *Macroom 110kV Station*

There are no waterbodies in or around the station. The closest European site to the Development is The Gearagh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 000108)<sup>1</sup> which is 4.3km away. There is no impact source pathway to the QI species of the SAC given the lack of a hydrological link or ecological pathway.

The Gearagh Special Protection Area (SPA) (site code 004109)<sup>2</sup> is the closest SPA to the Development and is 5.6km away. At this distance, the SPA lies beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. 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 species, thus no potential for loss of functionally-linked habitat. Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA (site code 004162)<sup>3</sup> is 10.5km from the Development.

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

<sup>2</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for The Gearagh SPA [004109]. First Order Sitespecific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>3</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA 004162. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and

For the reasons stated above for The Gearagh SPA, there is no potential for likely significant effects to the SCI of this SPA.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Dungarvan 110kV Station*

There are no waterbodies in or directly around the station. The closest waterbody to the Development is Ballyconnery Upper which is 395m east of the Development. The closest SAC to the station is Glendine Wood SAC (site code 002324)<sup>4</sup> which is 4.5km from the station. The SAC is designated for Killarney fern *Trichomanes speciosum* and there is no potential for impacts to this species given the minor scope of works and the lack of an ecological pathway to the SAC.

The closest SPA to the Development is Dungarvan Harbour SPA (site code 004032)<sup>5</sup> which is 575m south-east of the Development. 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 species. At 575m distance, the SPA lies beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. 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 species, thus no potential for loss of functionally-linked habitat.

Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (site code 004192)<sup>6</sup>, Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (site code 004193)<sup>7</sup> and Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (site code 002170)<sup>8</sup> are within 20km of the Development (they are 9.5km, 9.8km and 16.9km away respectively). However, there is no potential for likely significant effects to the SCI of these SPAs for the reasons detailed above for Dungarvan Harbour SPA.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Griffinrath 110kV Station*

There are no waterbodies in or directly around the station. The closest waterbody to the Development is Toolestown which is 175m east of the Development and is hydrologically connected to European sites within Dublin Bay. Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (site code 001398)<sup>9</sup> is 3.8km from the station. There is no impact source pathway to the QI species of the SAC given the lack of a hydrological link or ecological pathway, thus no potential for likely significant effects.

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA is 18.3km away from the station boundary. Owing to the SCIs of the site, its primary sensitivities relate to loss of functionally-linked habitat and noise and visual disturbance. 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 *Anser anser*. Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, the other SCI species, are habitat generalists for which loss of functionally-linked habitat is not a primary

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Heritage.

<sup>4</sup> NPWS (2020) Conservation Objectives: Glendine Wood SAC 002324. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>5</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Dungarvan Harbour SPA 004032. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>6</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA [004192]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC 002170. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>9</sup> NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC 001398. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

concern. At 18.3km distance, the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (site code 004063)<sup>10</sup> lies beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Knockearagh 110kV Station*

There are no waterbodies within the station. There is a drainage ditch along the road adjacent to the station, however given the scope of works, there is no potential for this drainage ditch to be affected. The nearest European site to the Development is Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC (site code 000365)<sup>11</sup> (approximately 1.9km distant). The SAC is designated for a variety of QI habitats and species. According to National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)<sup>12</sup>, some researchers have found that lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* normally forage in woodlands / scrub within 2.5km of their roosts<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, a core foraging zone of 2.5km around roost sites is considered to be appropriate when assessing potential impacts. Therefore, Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC was identified as being within the potential zone of influence of the Development. However, there are no likely significant effects on this QI species given that all of the minor works will be within the existing station which consists of hardstanding, which does not provide opportunities for foraging or commuting.

Killarney National Park SPA (site code 004038)<sup>14</sup> and Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (site code 004161)<sup>15</sup> are the only SPAs within 20km. They are 5km and 12km away, respectively. 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 species. Both SPAs lie beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundaries. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Mallow 110kV Station*

There are no waterbodies in or directly around the station. The closest European site is Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC which is 890m from the Development. There is no impact source pathway to the QI species of the SAC given the minor scope of the works and lack of a hydrological link or ecological pathway, thus no potential for likely significant effects.

The only SPA within 20km of the Development is Kilcolman Bog SPA (site code 004095)<sup>16</sup>. The SPA is 11km from the Development. All works will be carried out within the existing substation

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<sup>10</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA [004063]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>11</sup> NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC 000365. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>12</sup> NPWS (2018) Conservation objectives supporting document – lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) Version 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

<sup>13</sup> Bontadina, F., Schofield, H. and Naef-Daenzer, B. (2002) Radio-tracking reveals that lesser horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) forage in woodland. *Journal of Zoology* 258: 281–290.

<sup>14</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Killarney National Park SPA [004038]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>15</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

<sup>16</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Kilcolman Bog SPA [004095]. First Order Sitespecific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no habitats that are suitable for foraging / loafing SCI species. At 11km distance, the SPA lies beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the substation via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Newbridge 110kV*

There are no waterbodies in or around the station. The closest European site to the Development is Pollardstown Fen SAC (site code 000396)<sup>17</sup> which is 405m from the Development. Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to QI species foraging, resting or ranging beyond the designated site boundary are excluded with cognisance of the location and nature of the works involved. For example, the Development does not comprise noisy construction activities. Therefore, there is no potential for disturbance impacts to mobile QI species utilising functionally linked habitats. There is no hydrological link between the Development and the SAC, thus no potential for waterborne pollution.

The easternmost section of the Development is situated approximately 18.8km from the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, which is designated for mobile greylag goose. According to guidance published by Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), the core foraging range of greylag goose is 15-20km<sup>18</sup>, placing the Development within the wider area potentially used by this SCI species. However, the scope of the works does not involve conversion of greenfield land to development. Therefore, there is no potential for the loss of functionally linked foraging habitat of greylag goose. Given the minor nature of the works, it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Tralee 110kV*

The station is 85m from the River Big, however it is across the Oakpark Road and through scrub habitat, and there is no realistic hydrological pathway to this watercourse. The river is hydrologically linked 4km downstream to Tralee Bay and Magharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane SAC (site code 002070)<sup>19</sup> and Tralee Bay Complex SPA (site code 004188)<sup>20</sup>. There are no possible negative impacts on the water environment in this SAC from the Development due to the nature and small scale of the works (replacement of circuit breakers in an existing station is very unlikely to result in water pollution and/or changes to flow volumes), as well as the distance to the European site.

The scope of the works does not involve conversion of greenfield land to development. Therefore, there is no potential for the loss of functionally linked foraging habitat for any SCI species. All works will be carried out within the existing station boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no habitats that are suitable for foraging / loafing SCI species. At more than 4km distance, the SPA lies beyond the impact zone for visual and noise disturbance, and there is no direct disturbance potential for SCIs within the designated site boundary. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. The closest SAC to the Development is Ballyseedy Wood SAC (site code 002112)<sup>21</sup> which is 3.5km from the Development. This SAC is designated for alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*). There is no potential for likely

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<sup>17</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Pollardstown Fen SAC 000396. Version

1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage. (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). 4pp.

<sup>19</sup> NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Tralee Bay and Magharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane SAC 002070. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>20</sup> NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Tralee Bay Complex SPA 004188. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>21</sup> NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Ballyseedy Wood SAC 002112. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

significant effects to this SAC given the small scope of works, QI habitat and distance to the SAC. Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA and Castlemaine Harbour SPA (site code 004029)<sup>22</sup> are within 20km of the Development (3km and 15.4km, respectively). For the reasons detailed above, there is no potential for likely significant effects on any SCI species of these sites.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### *Aughinish 110kV*

The station is 116m from Lower River Shannon SAC<sup>23</sup> (site code 002165) and 121m from River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA<sup>24</sup> (site code 004077).

Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to QI species foraging, resting or ranging beyond the designated site boundary are excluded with cognisance of the location and nature of the works involved. For example, the Development does not comprise noisy construction activities. Therefore, there is no potential for disturbance impacts to mobile QI species utilising functionally linked habitats. There is no hydrological link between the Development and the SAC, thus no potential for waterborne pollution.

The scope of the works does not involve conversion of greenfield land to development. Moreover, the minor nature of the works means that it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur. 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 species, thus no potential for loss of functionally-linked habitat.

#### *Blake 110kV*

The station is 4.6km from Ballynafagh Lake SAC (site code 0021387)<sup>25</sup>. Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts to QI species foraging, resting or ranging beyond the designated site boundary are excluded with cognisance of the location and nature of the works involved. For example, the Development does not comprise noisy construction activities. Therefore, there is no potential for disturbance impacts to mobile QI species utilising functionally linked habitats. There is no hydrological link between the Development and the SAC, thus no potential for waterborne pollution.

The easternmost section of the Development is situated approximately 26.6km from the Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA<sup>26</sup>, which is designated for mobile greylag goose. According to guidance published by Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), the core foraging range of greylag goose is 15-20km<sup>27</sup>, placing the Development outside the wider area potentially used by this SCI species. Additionally, the scope of the works does not involve conversion of greenfield land to development. Therefore, there is no potential for the loss of functionally linked foraging habitat of greylag goose. Given the minor nature of the works, it is highly unlikely that disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA but in the vicinity of the Development would occur.

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<sup>22</sup> NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Castlemaine Harbour SPA 004029. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>23</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>24</sup> NPWS (2012) 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.

<sup>25</sup> NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Ballynafagh Lake SAC 001387. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>26</sup> NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA [004063]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>27</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage. (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). 4pp.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

#### **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:



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19 August 2024