



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1251b North Wall-Poolbeg Cable Decommissioning [Exempted Development] County Dublin

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, whether CP1251b North Wall-Poolbeg Cable Decommissioning [Exempted Development] ('the Works') individually or in-combination with other plans or projects will result in likely significant effects on a European site(s).

The Works comprise the removal of 220 kilovolt (kV) fluid filled cable circuits between North Wall and Poolbeg Substations. The decommissioning activities required are as follows:

- A fluid extraction process:
 - The oil from the tank in North Wall 220kV Substation will be extracted in line with regulatory requirements.
- A pipeline removal process:
 - A winch will be connected to the existing high voltage (HV) cables to pull them into a banded area within the respective substation where they can be cut and removed to a lined waste skip, in accordance with regulatory requirements
- A cleaning and assessment process:
 - Once the HV cables have been removed, the steel pipeline will be cleaned using a defined methodology in line with regulatory requirements, until all fluid is removed, and the pipeline is fully cleaned.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

According to relevant evidence-based guidance¹, the maximum distance travelled (between roosting and feeding sites) by non-breeding bird species for which the complex of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Dublin Bay are designated is 20km from the boundary of such a site.

The closest European sites to the Works are the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA² and the South Dublin Bay SAC², which are approximately 100m from the Works (at Poolbeg Station).

Ten European sites designated for mobile Special Conservation Interest (SCI) bird species are located within 20km of the Works, as follows (listed in order of increasing distance from the Works):

- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024², approximately 100m from the Works);
- North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006³, approximately 2.2km from the Works);
- North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236⁴, approximately 2.7km from the Works);
- Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016⁵, approximately 7.7km from the Works);

¹ SNH (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 – June 2016.

² NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA 004024. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³ NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁴ NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁵ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Baldoyle Bay SPA 004016. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

- Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 004172⁶, approximately 9.2km from the Works);
- Howth Head Coast SPA (site code 004113⁷, approximately 10.7km from the Works);
- Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 004117⁸, approximately 11.1km from the Works);
- Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 004025⁹, approximately 11.8km from the Works);
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 004015¹⁰, approximately 17.0km from the Works); and
- Lambay Island SPA (site code 004069¹¹, approximately 19.0km from the Works).

There is no potentially suitable foraging habitat for light-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* or other non-breeding wetland SCI species of the complex of coastal Dublin in amenity grasslands, arable fields and estuarine habitats adjacent to the Works at Northwall or Poolbeg 220kV Stations, or within the wider Zone of Influence for Likely Significant Effects. The nearest wetland low tide feeding and/or high tide roosting sites¹² are c. 500m distant from the Northwall station in the Tolka estuary to the north. Unusually, there are known wetland birds (Oystercatcher *Haemotopus ostralegus*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*; 127 in total¹²) roosting on hardstanding adjacent to the existing Poolbeg station, in the industrialised Poolbeg interior. However, these hardstanding roosting sites are visually screened from the Proposed Works by existing buildings, and from all Works in the interior of the existing Poolbeg Gas Insulated Switchgear Building. There are further known high tide roosting and low tide feeding sites c. 200m south of the Poolbeg station on sandy and intertidal areas; but these sites are screened from the Works by intervening buildings and treelines.

There are no known¹³ urban inland (amenity grassland) wetland bird feeding site within more than 1km of Northwall station. The 'compensatory grassland' adjacent to the Dublin Waste to Energy Facility is located 300m from Poolbeg station, and known to host significant numbers of light-bellied Brent geese and small numbers of other wetland birds. However the compensatory grassland is entirely screened from the works by intervening built industrial fabric.

Common tern *Sterna hirundo* and arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea* have been recorded nesting on artificial structures (e.g. pontoons known as 'The Dolphins')) in the Liffey estuary (approximately 200m north of the Poolbeg station). These are SCI species of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North-west Irish Sea SPA and Dalkey Islands SPA. However the pontoons are screened from the Works by intervening buildings, and also separated from the Works by a stretch of the Liffey Estuary.

Any direct disturbance impacts to SCI birds will be negligible, and not Likely Significant, based on the above locations of birds, relative to the Works, which will ensure visual and audio screening.

And generally, suitable habitat is not present within the ZOI of the Works for the majority of the SCI species of the above-listed SPAs, as they are species of seabird/shorebird relying solely or largely on marine or coastal habitats.

⁶ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Dalkey Islands SPA 004172. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁷ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head Coast SPA 004113. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁸ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Ireland's Eye SPA 004117. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁹ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Malahide Estuary SPA 004025. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹⁰ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rogerstown Estuary SPA 004015. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹¹ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SPA 004069. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹² According to the February 2012 High Tide Roosting survey informing the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area Conservation Objective Supporting Documents Version 1 (NPWS, 2014)

The Works traverse one transitional waterbody - the Lower Liffey Estuary - which is hydrologically-linked to another, the Tolka Estuary. These waterbodies mark the transition between freshwater and marine environments. There is a direct hydrological-link between the Lower Liffey Estuary and/or the Tolka Estuary and the following European sites in Dublin Bay (in order of increasing distance from the Works):

- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024, approximately 100m away);
- South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210¹⁴, approximately 100m away);
- North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006, approximately 2.2km away);
- North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206¹⁵, approximately 2.2km away);
- North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236, approximately 2.7km away); and,
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (site code 003000¹⁶, approximately 6.7km away).

The waste regulatory requirements for oil containment inherent in the project design will prevent any Likely Significant pollution events as a result of the Works, are highly unlikely to occur given the nature of the Works and that noting no in-stream activities are proposed, and noting also the existing unpolluted status of the Transitional Waters, as well as the very high dilution rates of any contaminations entering Dublin Bay. Therefore, likely significant effects of the Works on SPAs/SACs from water quality impacts are excluded.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Works 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 Works, 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 Lead Senior Ecologist
21 May 2025

¹⁴ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹⁵ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹⁶ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.