



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).

Disconnection of the North Wall - Poolbeg 220 kV HPOF cable from the system and the HPOF system depressurisation will be required before the HPOF system decommissioning can commence. The HPOF system decommissioning works will include the following:

- Removal of majority of the mineral oil from the existing steel pipe into the oil storage tank at North Wall 220 kV GIS substation (i.e., in multiple purges).
- Removal of the HV cable and any residual oil at the HV cable joint bays (and at the HV cable termination points at the respective HV substations).
 - All mineral oil removed in the substation will temporarily be stored in a storage tank before being evacuated into the mobile tankers and transported to an appropriately licensed waste facility
 - Additionally, bunded area with an industrial containment unit (ICU) and an impervious membrane resistant to hydrocarbons (High Density Polyethylene (HDPE), or equivalent) will be used in the respective HV substations at the HV cable termination points to contain the oil from the steel pipe in the area before being evacuated into the mobile tankers and transported to an appropriately licensed waste facility.
 - All HV cable joint bays will be lined up with an impervious membrane resistant to hydrocarbons (High Density Polyethylene (HDPE), or equivalent) and their immediate surrounding area will be bunded with an industrial containment unit (ICU) - mineral oil removed at joint bays will be stored in a mobile tanker and transported to an appropriately licenced waste facility.
- Decommissioning and dismantling of the oil storage tank and associated oil control station.

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 Special Area of Conservation (SAC)³, 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):

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 (2026) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 0040242, approximately 100m from the Works);
- North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006⁴, approximately 2.2km from the Works);
- North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236⁵, approximately 2.7km from the Works);
- Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016⁶, approximately 7.7km from the Works);
- Dalkey Islands SPA (site code 0041726⁷, approximately 9.2km from the Works);
- Howth Head Coast SPA (site code 0041137⁸, approximately 10.7km from the Works);
- Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 0041178⁹, approximately 11.1km from the Works);
- Malahide Estuary SPA (site code 0040259¹⁰, approximately 11.8km from the Works);
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA (site code 00401510¹¹, approximately 17.0km from the Works); and
- Lambay Island SPA (site code 00406911¹², 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 joint bays along the cable route, or North Wall and Poolbeg 220kV Stations, or within the wider Zone of Influence (Zoi) for likely significant effects. The nearest wetland low tide feeding and/or high tide roosting sites¹³ are c. 500m distant from the North Wall 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 total) roosting on hardstanding adjacent to the existing Poolbeg station, in the industrialised Poolbeg interior. However, these hardstanding roosting sites are visually screened from the 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 known¹⁴ urban inland (amenity grassland) wetland bird feeding sites within 240 m of the Works. The Works at joint bays will be undertaken within the road in an urban setting. There is intervening habitat of buildings, treelines and hedgerows, thus no potential for a likely significant effect to foraging Brent geese.

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.

⁴ NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁵ NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁶ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Baldoyle Bay SPA 004016. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁷ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Dalkey Islands SPA 004172. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁸ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Howth Head Coast SPA 004113. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁹ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Ireland's Eye SPA 004117. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

¹⁰ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Malahide Estuary SPA 004025. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹¹ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Rogerstown Estuary SPA 004015. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹² NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lambay Island SPA 004069. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

¹³ 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)

¹⁴ Based on Benson, L. (2009). Use of Inland feeding sites by Light-bellied Brent Geese in Dublin 20008-2009. Irish Birds 8: 563-570, and Scott Cawley (2017). Natura Impact Statement: Information for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment - Proposed Residential Development, St. Paul's College, Sybil Hill, Raheny, Dublin 5. Report produce for Crekav by Scott Cawley. An Bord Pleanála case reference PL29N.302225

And generally, suitable habitat is not present within the Zol 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.

The Works traverse one transitional waterbody - the Lower Liffey Estuary - which is hydrologically-linked to 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 (approximately 100m away);
- South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210, approximately 100m away);
- North Bull Island SPA (approximately 2.2km away);
- North Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000206¹⁵, approximately 2.2km away);
- North-West Irish Sea SPA (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. Pollution events 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:



Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist
19 August 2026

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.