



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1273 220kV Loop between Central Bulk Supply Substation and Belcamp-Shellybanks 220kV Circuit [Exempted Development] Dublin City

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 CP1273 220kV Loop between Central Bulk Supply Substation and Belcamp-Shellybanks 220kV Circuit [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 involves the construction of a 220kV loop in/loop out cable under the M50, linking the Central Bulk Supply Substation (currently in planning) to the existing Belcamp-Shellybanks 220kV circuit (which runs on the northern side of the M50). The crossing will be achieved through horizontal directional drilling (HDD). The Development also includes ancillary ducting.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

The Development will occur entirely underneath the M50 motorway, linking an existing 220kV circuit to the newly proposed Central Bulk Supply Substation. Therefore, there will be no direct loss of foraging/roosting habitat, with all works taking place underground and on adjoining hardstanding. There is no usable habitat for qualifying Special Conservation Interest (SCI)/Qualifying Interest (QI) species immediately surrounding the Development, which is situated amidst industrial development.

The closest European site to the Development is the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA; site code 004024¹), which is located approximately 200m to the north ('as the crow flies'). The SPA is designated for a range of wintering and breeding SCI species, which may utilise habitats within and beyond the designated site boundary. While the SPA lies within a potential visual and noise disturbance distance from the Development (typically taken to be 300m², with visual stimuli having an impact at greater distances than aural ones), it is extremely unlikely that the HDD will result in any material disturbance to SCI species for several reasons. Firstly, Development is separated from the SPA by Eastpoint Business Park, which will be associated with its own disturbance profile to which SCI species will be habituated to. Furthermore, the HDD works will be associated with relatively low noise levels (compared to impulsive works) and will be short-term (works will be completed within a week). The closest parcel of functionally-linked habitat used by Brent geese lies further from the Development than the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, such that there will be no material disturbance effects^{3 4}.

¹ 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.

² Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS). University of Hull. (2013). Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit – Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects. 36pp.

³ 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 produced for Crekav by Scott Cawley. An Bord Pleanála case reference PL29N.302225.

⁴ Benson, L. (2009). Use of Inland feeding sites by Light-bellied Brent Geese in Dublin 2008-2009. Irish Birds 8, pp 563-570.

At respective distances of 3.2km and 8.2km from the Development, the North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006⁵) and Baldoyle Bay SPA (site code 004016⁶) lie far beyond the zone for potential direct disturbance impacts. According to published research⁷, the maximum distance that non-breeding SCIs will typically travel between SPA boundaries and foraging sites is 20km. While this includes the area surrounding the Development, the habitats that are present are entirely unsuitable for SCI species. As highlighted above, the closest suitable habitat parcel for Brent goose lies beyond a commonly accepted disturbance distance.

The North-west Irish Sea SPA (site code 004236⁸, approximate distance of 9.1km) and Ireland's Eye SPA (site code 004117⁹, approximate distance of 11.9km) are both designated for various breeding and non-breeding SCI seabird and gull species, many of which have large core foraging ranges. However, seabirds will generally forage in coastal waters or the open marine environment and, therefore, will not be present in the area surrounding the Development. Gull species are generalists that forage and roost in a wide range of habitats. Temporary, small-scale disturbance would not impact these species, due to the availability of extensive alternative usable habitats. Overall, it is concluded that likely significant effects as a result of disturbance to SCI bird species (both occurring within SPA boundaries or on functionally-linked habitats) will not occur.

There are no watercourses directly connecting the Development to the Tolka River, which is in hydrological continuity with the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Bull Island SPA and North Dublin Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC; site code 000206¹⁰). The River Tolka itself lies approximately 84m from the Development, with intervening roads and urban development. Generally, HDD construction works prevent frac-out by carefully managing drilling fluid pressure and flow rates, with the aim of remaining within the geological formation's strength. It is also unlikely that run-off from the Development containing other non-toxic or toxic pollutants would reach the river at this distance. Furthermore, an existing drainage and runoff treatment system is already in place, which would also intercept and treat any pollutants deriving from the construction of the Development. The flowpath distances to the European sites, especially the North Bull Island SPA and South Dublin Bay SAC (approximately 4km), should also be taken into account. At this distance, attenuation and dilution processes in the more open coastal waters would also reduce any residual waterborne pollution to negligible levels. Likely significant effects from waterborne pollution are therefore excluded.

The Development is not located in a known freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* catchment.

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

The impacts of the Development itself are so small and will occur over a short period of time such that there is no possibility of the impacts of other projects or plans acting in-combination to give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites.

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⁵ NPWS (2015). Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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

⁷ SNH (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 – June 2016.

⁸ NPWS (2023). Conservation Objectives: North-west Irish Sea SPA 004236. 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: North Dublin Bay SAC 000206. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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

Signed:



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03 October 2025