



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1312 Athy 110kV Station and Carlow 110kV Station Works [Exempted Development] County Kildare and County Carlow

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 CP1312 Athy 110kV Station and Carlow 110kV Station [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 works within the boundary of the existing energised substations.

Athy 110kV Station works:

- Bay conductor replacement
- Surge Arrestor (SA) and Current Transformer (CT) replacement
- Decommissioning of Line Trap (LT)

Carlow 110kV Station works:

- CT and Voltage Transformer (VT) replacement
- Decommissioning of LT

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

Athy 110kV Station

The closest European site to the Development is River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 002162¹), which is approximately 0.9km east of Athy 110kV Station ('as the crow flies'). The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the SAC comprise a range of Annex I habitats, a range of fish species, otter *Lutra lutra*, Killarney fern *Trichomanes speciosum*, freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* and white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*. The Development lies within a catchment with previous records of freshwater pearl mussel, but the current status of the species is unknown. The nearest waterbody to the Development is a drain located approximately 8 m north of the Athy 110kV Station boundary, identified on the Tailte Éireann PRIME2 Watercourses layer. This unnamed drain is potentially hydrologically linked to Grand Canal Barrow Line (Barrow)², approximately 1.4km downstream of which is River Barrow and River Nore SAC. However, should a pollution event occur, then there would be dilution due to the intervening distance. Furthermore, the works will occur within the existing Athy 110kV Station boundary, which limits the likelihood of pollution reaching any waterbody, as any spillage of pollutants would be contained on the hardstanding areas of the substation. There is therefore no potential for likely significant effects relating to water quality on the SAC.

From a review of aerial imagery, there appears to be a lock where the Grand Canal Barrow Line (Barrow) meets the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which could act as a barrier to movement of SCI species. Furthermore, the canal itself is unlikely to offer suitable habitat for the mobile SCI species of River Barrow and River Nore SAC, except for otter which may use the canal for foraging/commuting. However, the unnamed drain adjacent to the Athy 110kV Station is

¹ NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

² Environmental protection Agency (EPA) maps website <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> (accessed 13 February 2025).

unlikely to be used by otter due to its small size and lack of suitable foraging opportunities. In any case, given the minor and temporary works involved, there is no potential for likely significant effects relating to visual and noise disturbance of mobile SCI species, should otter be present nearby to the Development.

Carlow 110kV Station

The closest European site to the Carlow 110kV Station is Slaney River Valley SAC (site code 000781³), located approximately 4.8km away.

There are no Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or any other European sites nearby or potentially connected to the Development 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 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

24 February 2025

³ NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Slaney River Valley SAC 000781. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.