



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1389 Limerick to Rathkeale 110kV Uprate Works [Exempted Development] County 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, whether CP1389 Limerick to Rathkeale 110kV Uprate Works [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 that will be required in accordance with the Transmission Line Assessment Report (TLAR) report¹ are as follows:

- Retire existing conductor and replace with 84km of 430mm² ACSR "Bison";
- Replace towers at nine locations;
- Retain eight towers with member strengthening works and retain seven towers without member strengthening works;
- Treat and paint fifteen towers that are being retained;
- Construct new foundations for the nine tower replacements;
- Strengthen foundations at eleven towers;
- Replace stays at one location;
- Replace crossarms at eight locations. Fill gains are noted to be fitted on twelve. polesets;
- Replace 48 polesets and re-plumb twelve polesets;
- Replace anti-climbing guard at four locations and fit danger locks to ACGs at two locations; and,
- Replace any necessary equipment in the remote ends (Limerick and Rathkeale Substation) as per the station assessment report carried out by asset management.

Analysis of Pathways to European Sites

The closest European site to the Works is the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 002165²), located approximately 25m away ('as the crow flies') from poleset no. 63). The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of this SAC comprise a range of Annex I habitats and Annex II species such as estuaries, salt meadows, freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, lamprey species, Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and otter *Lutra lutra*. The Works to be undertaken at this location will be minor and involve the replacement of an existing wooden poleset.

The next closest European site to the Works is the Askeaton Fen Complex SAC (site code 002279³), which is located approximately 50m away. The QIs of this SAC comprise Annex I calcareous and alkaline fens. Curraghchase Woods SAC (site code 000174⁴) is located approximately 300m away from the Works and the QIs comprise Annex I alluvial forests and yew woods and Annex II Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* and lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area

¹ ESB (2025). Limerick - Rathkeale 110 kV Line Uprate Transmission Line Assessment Report (TLAR).

² NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³ NPWS (2018). Conservation Objectives: Askeaton Fen Complex SAC 002279. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁴ NPWS (2023). Conservation Objectives: Curraghchase Woods SAC 000174. Version 2.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

(SPA) (site code 004077⁵) is located approximately 500m from the Works and the Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) comprise several waterbird species including light-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* and curlew *Numenius arquata*. The Works to be undertaken in the vicinity of these European sites will involve the replacement of wooden polesets and/or hardware with no instream works or excavations required.

Construction works have the potential to result in visual and noise disturbance to QI/SCI species using functionally-linked habitats adjoining the works. However, the Works to replace existing wooden polesets and hardware of existing structures are minor and unintrusive. Furthermore, the location of Works closest the Lower River Shannon SAC (i.e. poleset no. 63) is not within a freshwater pearl mussel catchment. There is also an extensive resource of supporting habitats in closer proximity to the Lower River Shannon SAC along numerous watercourses, which are more likely to be used by otter. The closest section of the Works to Curraghchase Woods SAC is located in open agricultural fields which are not the preferred habitat of lesser horseshoe bat. Moreover, any existing linear features potentially used by bats (e.g. treelines/hedgerows) will be retained and there will be no change to the placement of existing structures and lighting levels present. Therefore, likely significant effects from disturbance of QI species using functionally-linked habitat can be excluded.

The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is located approximately 500m from the Works at its closest point, near wooden poleset no. 63. Any direct disturbance impacts to SCI birds will be negligible based on the limited scale, sequential nature and temporary duration of activities. Given the nature of the Works, any increase in visual, noise, vibration or artificial light will not be significant. While there are potentially suitable foraging habitats (i.e. agricultural grassland) along the Works, the SCI species, including light-bellied Brent goose, are not considered to make significant use of habitats directly adjacent to the Works, given the abundance of similar habitat in the wider environment. If any temporary displacement of birds during the works took place as a result of disturbance, there would be extensive alternative suitable habitat available in the surrounding landscape, beyond disturbance distance. In addition, any impacted grasslands would be restored to their former condition following completion of the works; therefore, likely significant effects as a result of disturbance to SCI birds in any functionally-linked habitat can be excluded.

These European sites are sensitive to negative changes in water quality, such as from the release of toxic chemicals and/or sediment. However, there is no direct hydrological connection between the Works and any European sites. There will be no works within any European site and there will be no instream works. Furthermore, pollution events as a result of the Works are not likely to occur given the minor nature of the Works (i.e. the replacement of existing wooden polesets and/or hardware).

The Works are located approximately 50m from the River Maigue. The River Maigue flows into the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA approximately 500m downstream of this location and then outputs into the Upper River Shannon approximately 10km downstream. The Works will also occur 500m from the Curraghchase North Stream which flows into the Curraghchase Woods SAC approximately 500m downstream. These long flowpath distances will allow for sufficient dilution and attenuation of water pollutants. There is also a dilution effect on contaminants to downstream estuarine sites due to the tidal water movements within the estuary.

The closest European site to the Works is the Lower River Shannon SAC. Airborne pollution is not likely to affect this European site given that there are no QI/SCIs from nearby European sites sensitive to atmospheric pollution that rely on supporting habitats within 50m of the Site. Construction-generated dust and vehicular emissions would be minimal for the minor and temporary works required. Overall, it is concluded that likely significant effects from the Works in relation to atmospheric pollution can be excluded.

⁵ 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.

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

Signed:



Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

23 May 2025