



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1391 Derryiron-Maynooth-Timahoe 110kV Uprate Project [Exempted Development] Counties Kildare and Offaly

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, if the CP1391 Derryiron-Maynooth-Timahoe 110kV Uprate Project [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 the uprating of the existing 110kV line comprising:

- replacement / restringing of the existing overhead line circuit conductor and wires with new higher capacity conductor wires;
- replacement of Intermediate Polesets (IMP; wooden polesets) and steel masts (with replacement structures being constructed at or adjacent the structures they will replace);
- replacement of hardware and fittings (e.g. suspension clamps, insulators and vibration dampeners) at all structures as required;
- re-capping and remedial works for shear blocks at identified steel masts;
- associated site development works, including foundation upgrades, strain assemblies, vegetation clearance, disassembly / reassembly of gate posts / piers and removal / reinstatement of existing fencing; and,

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

The nearest European sites to the Development with sensitivity to hydrological impacts are the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC)¹ (site code 002299) and Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC² (site code 001398), which lie at distances of approximately 10.1km and 984m from the Development, respectively. The flowpath distance to the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is more than 18km via the River Boyne, which is too far for direct water quality impacts within the designated site itself. However, the non-designated stretches of the River Boyne and River Blackwater (both traversed by the Development) are considered to be functionally-linked to the SAC in relation to its Qualifying Interest (QI) species and require further consideration in relation to potential water quality impacts. The Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC lies in close proximity to the overhead line route and is hydrologically linked to the Development via the River Lyreen.

Steel mast replacement works, the activities with the highest water quality impact potential, will only be carried out at specific locations. The nearest steel masts where works will be undertaken are located approximately 202m (steel mast 63) from an engineered stream linking to the River Boyne and 301m (steel mast 190) from the River Lyreen respectively. These distances are considered too far for any material water quality impacts to occur. Furthermore, steel mast replacement works are temporary (maximum two week duration per mast), which further reduces the potential for likely significant effects even in-combination.

¹ NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC [002299]. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

² NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC [001398]. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts on QI otter from the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC were also considered. Due to their extensive home ranges, otter are expected to frequently utilise resting places and holts along watercourses beyond the designated site boundary, including those traversed by the Development. However, otter are also very tolerant of anthropogenic disturbance and it should be noted that the construction works for the Development will not involve any piling activities (works with greatest at-source sound pressure levels). Furthermore, otter are nocturnal mammals, and no night-time works will be undertaken for the Development.

There are no 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

17 August 2023