



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1403 Rinawade – Dunfirth Tee – Kinnegad 110 kV Conductor Replacement [Exempted Development] County Offaly, County Meath and County Kildare.

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 carried out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of relevant European sites, whether CP1403 Rinawade – Dunfirth Tee – Kinnegad 110kV Conductor Replacement [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 replacement of 20.33km of existing 110kV conductor (430mm² ACSR conductor MOT at 80 degrees Celsius) with a similar conductor. The individual spans where conductor replacement is required are:

- 12.28km between polesets 38-93.
- 7.31km between polesets 153-185.
- 0.74km between polesets 214-218.

The Development will be on existing overhead line infrastructure and is limited to the replacement of the existing conductors. It will not require any works to polesets, ground disturbance, vegetation clearance or habitat alteration, and will not result in any impacts on habitats beneath or adjacent to the line.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

There is no direct hydrological connectivity between the Development and any European site, and the Development will not involve any intrusive works. The Development is not within or hydrologically connected to a known freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* catchment. There is therefore no potential for likely significant effects related to water quality on any European site.

Based on the works involved, the following possible impacts are considered potentially relevant to the Development:

- Disturbance of European site features (e.g. through visual disturbance, noise, vibration or artificial lighting) has been considered as a potential impact pathway associated with the Development. Such effects are primarily relevant to bird species that form the Special Conservation Interests (SCI) of Special Protection Areas (SPA), particularly where works occur within or adjacent to suitable supporting habitat or areas functionally linked to an SPA.

Published guidance indicates that certain non-breeding waterbird species may make foraging movements over considerable distances from their SPA. NatureScot's Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) guidance identifies a maximum connectivity distance of up to 20 km¹ for some species, although species-specific foraging ranges are often substantially lower. Consequently, SPAs located within 20km of the Development have been considered in relation to potential disturbance effects where suitable habitat or ecological connectivity may exist.

¹ Scottish Natural Heritage (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 - June 2016 (online). Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/assessing-connectivity-special-protection-areas> (Accessed 09 July 2026).

In addition, bird species exhibit varying sensitivities to construction-related disturbance. Cutts et al. (2013²) provide species-specific evidence regarding the effects of visual disturbance, noise and construction activities on waterbird behaviour and distribution. Accordingly, consideration has been given to whether the proposed works could result in disturbance effects on SCI bird species either within designated sites or within functionally linked habitat that supports SPA populations.

Consequently, the following European sites are considered to be within the potential zone of influence (Zol) of the Development:

- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232³), located c. 7.2km north-west of the Development at its closest point to poleset 92. The site is designated for kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*.
- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (site code 004024⁴), located c. 18.1km east of the Development at its closest point to poleset 218. The site is designated for light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, knot *Calidris canutus*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, roseate tern *Sterna dougallii*, common tern *Sterna hirundo*, arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea* and wetland habitat.

The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA is designated for kingfisher, a species associated with freshwater habitats and river corridors. The SPA is located c. 7.2km north-west of the Development at its closest point to poleset 92. Given the substantial separation distance, the absence of any impact pathways (including hydrological connectivity), and the minor and temporary nature of the Development, there is no potential for likely significant effects on SCI kingfisher or on the conservation objectives of River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA is designated for a range of wintering waterbirds, including light-bellied brent goose, which may use agricultural grasslands and other inland habitats as ex-situ feeding areas. Whilst agricultural grassland occurs around the Development, the Development is limited to the replacement of existing conductors on an existing overhead line and will not require ground disturbance, vegetation clearance or any alteration of habitats. The core foraging range of light-bellied brent goose is up to 15km⁵ and the Development is outside of this core foraging range. The other SCI species of the SPA are waterbirds, with no suitable habitat in the vicinity of the Development. Given the separation distance, the minor and temporary nature of the Development, and the absence of any impacts to potentially suitable supporting habitat, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on SCI birds associated with the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA.

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 relevant European site's Conservation Objectives. Due to the nature of the Development, there is no potential for in-combination effects.

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.

² Cutts, N., Hemingway, K and Spencer, J. (2013). Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit: Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects. Produced by the Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS) University of Hull. (online). Available at: https://www.tide-toolbox.eu/tidetools/waterbird_disturbance_mitigation_toolkit/ (Accessed 27 June 2026).

³ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA 004232. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Light-bellied brent goose is not specifically included as a selected species in NatureScot guidance. However, research on brent geese is used as a proxy for barnacle geese *Branta leucopsis*, thus the buffer zone for the latter species (core range 15km) is taken to be appropriate for light-bellied brent geese.

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:



Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

31 July 2026