



## Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

### CP1450 Ardnacrusha-Drumline 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) Dynamic Line Rating (DLR) Device Project [Exempted Development] County Clare

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 CP1450 Ardnacrusha-Drumline 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) Dynamic Line Rating (DLR) Device 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 involves the installation of a small sized DLR device on the OHL for the real-time measurements of power flow, circuit temperature and circuit angle.

#### Analysis of Pathways to European Sites

There are no waterbodies within either Ardnacrusha 110kV or Drumline 110kV Stations, although they lie in relatively close proximity to the Urlan Beg River (Drumline) and North Ballycannon River (Ardnacrusha). Both rivers flow southward and feed into the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC, site code 002165<sup>1</sup>) and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA, site code 004077<sup>2</sup>).

The Development crosses a range of other streams and rivers, which are all hydrologically connected to the SAC and SPA, including the Cloverhill Stream, Owenogarney River and Gournaa River. The Lower River Shannon SAC is designated for a range of Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats and species (freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* and otter *Lutra lutra*). All QIs are sensitive to negative water quality changes, such as those arising from construction works and in the case of QI species this sensitivity extends into all functionally-linked sections of watercourses. The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is designated for a wide range of Special Conservation Interest (SCI) bird species, including waders, waterfowl and seabirds.

Due to the nature and scale of the Development, which will only comprise the installation (using a Mobile Elevated Working Platform) of a small DLR on the OHL, with no storage of fuels or other pollutants during the works, there is no potential for significant negative water quality impacts.

At an approximate straight-line distance of 2.7km to the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA, the Development falls within the core foraging range of some of its designated SCI species. For example, whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* are highly mobile, some travelling long distances of up to 20km to foraging habitats beyond the designated site boundaries (also known as 'functionally-linked' habitats). Due to the nature of the Development, there is no potential for a direct temporary and/or permanent loss of functionally-linked habitats. Furthermore, due to the minor scale, which will not involve any significant noise-generating activities, and temporary nature of the works, there will be no likely significant noise and visual disturbance of SCI species using functionally-linked arable fields or grassland along the OHL route. Furthermore, there are extensive tracts of suitable habitats much closer to the SPA, which are more likely to be used by SCI species based on their proximity. QI otter from the Lower River Shannon SAC are likely to be resting and roaming along watercourses that are hydrologically linked to the SAC and traversed by the Development. However, the Development will not result

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<sup>1</sup> NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

in likely significant effects regarding visual/noise disturbance to otter due to the very minor and temporary nature of the works. Furthermore, the fitting of DLR devices will not be undertaken at night when otter show peak activity levels.

There are no other European sites nearby, or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link.

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

Signed:



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29 July 2024