Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1454 Gorman–Maynooth 220 kV Overhead Line Uprate Project [Exempted Development] (Counties Meath and 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 undertaken Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of relevant European sites, if the CP1454 Gorman–Maynooth 220kV Uprate Project ('the development') individually or in combination with other plans or projects would be likely to have a significant effect(s) on a European site(s).

The development comprises the following:

- Uprate the Gorman–Maynooth 220 kV circuit to an equivalent rating that is in line with the HTLS technology available from the ESB Networks standard transmission conductors that can provide a Summer/Autumn/Winter rating of 793/808/824 MVA (2081/2120/2161 A) with an operating temperature of 210 °C under normal operating conditions and 10% short term overload capability.
- Uprate of bay conductor on the Maynooth 220 kV Bay (F5) in Gorman 220 kV station to provide equivalent rating to line conductor plus 10% short term overload capability.
- 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.
- Tower height increases between 1.5m-6m for five towers only.
- Replacement of hardware and fittings (e.g. suspension clamps, insulators and vibration dampeners) at all structures as required.
- Recapping and remedial works for shear blocks at identified steel masts.
- Associated site development works, including new foundations, foundation upgrades/strengthening, strain assemblies, vegetation clearance, disassembly / reassembly of gate posts / piers and removal / reinstatement of existing fencing.

The nearest European sites to the development with sensitivity to potential impacts are the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299)[1] and River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232)[2], which the development oversails. The nearest structures where works will be undertaken are located approximately 29 m (steel mast 12) from the SAC and 110 m from the SPA respectively. There are no hydrological pathways for likely significant effects to any European sites.

Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts on Qualifying Interest (QI) otter *Lutra lutra* 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; however, there is no optimal otter habitat within the zone of influence of the works. Furthermore, otter are nocturnal mammals, and no night-time works will be undertaken for the development.

An ecology survey was undertaken on 02 September 2024 between steel mast 11 and 12 for QI habitats and suitable habitat for QI / SCI species. No otter resting sites or QI habitats were recorded within the zone of likely significant effects from the development during the survey.

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 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.

The risk of ex-situ impacts to the QI and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) roosting, foraging, or nesting away from European sites has also been excluded, following analysis and survey of known and potential habitats for mobile bird and other animal populations.

The development is not located within the catchment of any freshwater pearl mussels *Margaritifera*, or other sensitive aquatic species which are the QIs of European sites. Impact pathways to other far-flying mobile QI/SCI species from distant European sites do not arise, due to the absence of supporting habitats for such species within the Zone of Influence of the development, or because the development is outside the range of QI populations of a given species (e.g. lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*).

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

[2] NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA 004232. Version 1.National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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:

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27 May 2026