Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1460 Arva and Navan 110kV Station Works and Fibre-wrapping between Poleset 1-280 on the Existing Arva-Navan 110kV OHL [Exempted Development] County Meath and County Cavan.

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 CP1460 Arva and Navan 110kV Station Works and fibre-wrapping between poleset 1-280 on the existing Arva-Navan 110kV overhead line (OHL) [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:

- Remote end works and bay works within Arva 110kV Station and Navan 110kV Station.
- Fibre wrapping of the existing OHL from poleset 1–280 along the existing Arva–Navan 110kV OHL.

All works within Navan and Arva 110kV substations will be carried out entirely within the boundary of the existing energised substations. Fibre-wrapping will be carried out above ground on existing structures. The Development will require no vegetation clearance or intrusive works.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

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 proposed 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 20km[1] 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.
  In addition, bird species exhibit varying sensitivities to construction-related disturbance. Cutts *et al.* (2013[2]) 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 Development could result in

[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 31 July 2026).

[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).

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 (ZoI) of the Development:

- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code 002299[3]), oversailing between polesets 237–239 and 240-241. Designated for the habitats alkaline fens and alluvial forests, and for the species river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and otter *Lutra lutra*. In addition, numerous watercourses and unnamed drains traverse the OHL route, providing connectivity to the SAC.
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code 004232[4]), located approximately 2.6km south-west of the Development at Navan 110kV Station at its closest point. Designated for kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. In addition, numerous watercourses and unnamed drains traverse the OHL route, providing connectivity to the SPA.
- Lough Sheelin SPA (site code 004065[5]), located approximately 380m south of the Development at its closest point between pole sets 91–92. Designated for great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, and wetland habitats and waterbirds. There is no direct hydrological connection between the SPA and the Development; however, the overhead line crosses watercourse INNY_040 between pole sets 105-106, which is hydrologically connected to Lough Sheelin SPA.

The Development will require no removal of existing structures, foundation strengthening, or other intrusive works. There will therefore be no loss of Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats within the boundary of River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. The SAC is designated for alkaline fens, which is groundwater dependent. However, all works for the Development will occur above ground, on existing structures, and there is no possibility of effects to groundwater flow or volume. Airborne pollution is unlikely given the absence of any excavation works for the Development. Although the SAC is crossed by the Development between pole sets 237–239 and 240-241, fibre-wrapping is a non-intrusive process, and there is no potential for impacts on water quality or supported habitats. River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is designated for the mobile QI otter, river lamprey and Atlantic salmon. However, the minor and temporary nature of the works means there is no potential for likely significant effects relating to visual or noise disturbance. Therefore, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC.

Regarding the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA, given the minor and temporary nature of the Development, there is no potential for likely significant effects on kingfisher arising from visual or noise disturbance. While some watercourses crossed by the OHL flow towards the SPA and may be used by kingfisher outside the SPA boundary, the separation distance between these watercourses and the SPA, together with the short-term, non-intrusive nature of the works, means there is no pathway for likely significant effects on kingfisher or its supporting habitat. Therefore, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

Lough Sheelin SPA is located approximately 380m from the Development at its closest point between pole sets 91–92. The lands beneath and surrounding the OHL comprise agricultural fields and contain no wetland habitat. While SCI birds may occur outside the SPA boundary, suitable alternative foraging habitat is widespread in the wider area. Given the minor and temporary nature of the works, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on SCI species. Therefore, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on Lough Sheelin SPA.

Whilst other SPAs occur within 20km of the Development, including Lough Oughter Complex SPA and Lough Derravaragh SPA, these sites have not been considered in the assessment. The Development comprises minor, temporary works carried out entirely within existing substations

[3] 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.

[4] 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.

[5] NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Lough Sheelin SPA 004065. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

and on existing overhead line structures, with no vegetation clearance, excavation or other intrusive activities required. Given the nature and scale of the works, the absence of suitable supporting habitat within the works area, and the distance between the Development and these SPAs, there is no potential for likely significant disturbance effects on their SCI species. Furthermore, the Development is located beyond the core foraging range of the relevant SCI species, including wintering geese, and therefore no source-pathway-receptor linkage exists. Accordingly, likely significant effects on these SPAs can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information.

The Development is not located within, nor hydrologically connected to, any freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* catchment. Accordingly, there is no pathway for effects on any SAC designated for freshwater pearl mussel and these sites are not considered further in this assessment.

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.

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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Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

11 August 2026