



## **Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1486 Athlone–Shannonbridge 110kV Fibre-wrapping [Exempted Development] County Roscommon and County Westmeath**

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 CP1486 Athlone-Shannonbridge 110kV Fibre-wrapping [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:

- Installation of fibre optic wrap on existing circa 22km of 110kV OHL between Athlone 110kV and Shannonbridge 220kV stations
- Minor works within Athlone 110kV Station and Shannonbridge 110kV Station.

Towers 127 and 128 will be accessed on foot and the polesets climbed, and the fibre-wrapping at these two towers will be undertaken from 01st April to 17th April, or from 17th August to 31st August, inclusive.

All works for the Development will be carried out above ground on existing structures. The Development will not require any intrusive works.

### **Analysis of Pathways to European sites**

Based on the Development project description, the following possible impacts are considered potentially relevant to the Development:

- Disturbance of qualifying species (e.g. visual, noise, vibration or artificial light). According to published research<sup>1</sup>, the maximum distance to which non-breeding bird species for which SPAs are designated may theoretically travel to forage is 20km from the boundary of such a site (though in reality, most species foraging distances are significantly lower than this). Cutts et al. (2013)<sup>2</sup> provides species-specific information on the sensitivity of several bird species which are qualifying features of SPAs to disturbance impacts from construction works.

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

- River Suck Callows Special Protection Area (SPA) (site code 0040973). Oversailed by existing OHL between polesets 124-125. Approximately 45m from Shannonbridge substation. Designated for a variety of wintering bird species and wetlands.
- Middle Shannon Callows SPA (site code 0040964). Oversailed by existing OHL between polesets 124-125 and 126-129, with polesets 127 and 128 located within the SPA. Approximately 45m from Shannonbridge substation. Designated for a variety of wintering bird species and wetlands.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 29 January 2026).

<sup>2</sup> 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/tidertools/waterbird\\_disturbance\\_mitigation\\_toolkit/](https://www.tide-toolbox.eu/tidertools/waterbird_disturbance_mitigation_toolkit/) (Accessed 29 January 2026).

<sup>3</sup> NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives: River Suck Callows SPA 004097. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>4</sup> NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives: Middle Shannon Callows SPA 004096. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- River Shannon Callows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 0002165). Oversailed by existing OHL in two locations, between polesets 124-125 and polesets 126-129, with polesets 127 and 128 located within the SAC. Designated for otter and the Annex I habitats *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinia caerulea*), lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*), alkaline fens, limestone pavements and alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*).
- Lough Ree SAC (site code 0004406). Located 1.4km northeast of Athlone substation, and is hydrologically connected to the OHL via the River Shannon, which itself is part of the River Shannon Callows SAC. Designated for otter and the Annex I habitats natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation, semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), active raised bogs, degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, alkaline fens, limestone pavements, bog woodland, and alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*).
- Lough Ree SPA (site code 0040647). Located 1.4km northeast of Athlone substation. Designated for a number of wetland and wintering birds including the long-ranging species whooper swan.
- Mongan Bog SPA (site code 0040178). Located 5.8km southeast of the Development at its closest point. Designated for the long-ranging Greenland white-fronted goose.
- River Little Brosna Callows SPA (site code 0040869). Located 11.8km south of Shannonbridge substation. Designated for a number of wetland and wintering birds including the long-ranging species whooper swan and Greenland white-fronted goose.
- All Saints Bog SPA (site code 00410310). Located 13.3km south of Shannonbridge substation. Designated for the long-ranging Greenland white-fronted goose.
- Dovegrove Callows SPA (site code 00413711). Located 17.9km south of Shannonbridge substation. Designated for the long-ranging Greenland white-fronted goose.

It is noted that the Development does not pass through any catchments with known records of freshwater pearl mussel. Fibre-wrapping is a non-intrusive process, and there is no potential for any water quality impacts.

The OHL oversails the River Suck Callows SPA between polesets 124-125. Due to the minor scale of the development and the temporary nature of the works, there will be no pathways for likely significant effects associated with noise and visual disturbance of any Special Conservation Interests (SCI) birds within the bounds of River Suck Callows SPA. SCI birds may also occur outside their European site boundaries, and disturbance can also occur at distances up to 500m<sup>2</sup>. However, due to the minor scale and temporary nature of the works, there will be no pathways for likely significant effects from noise and visual disturbance of any SCI species associated with River Suck Callows SPA which may use functionally linked habitats (e.g. arable fields) along the OHL route.

Polesets 127 and 128 are within Middle Shannon Callows SPA. Fibre-wrapping of these polesets will occur from 01st April to 17th April, or from 17th August to 31st August, inclusive, outwith the key wintering periods for SPA SCIs. There is therefore no possibility of likely significant effects from disturbance to any wintering SCIs within the bounds of Middle Shannon Callows

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<sup>5</sup> NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives: River Shannon Callows SAC 000216. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>6</sup> NPWS (2016). Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SAC 000440. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SPA 004064. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>8</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Mongan Bog SPA 004017. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>9</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: River Little Brosna Callows SPA 004086. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>10</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: All Saints Bog SPA 004103. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

<sup>11</sup> NPWS (2025). Conservation Objectives: Dovegrove Callows SPA 004137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

SPA. For the same reasons as outlined above in relation to River Suck Callows SPA, there will be no likely significant noise and visual disturbance of SCI birds using functionally linked habitat along the OHL route.

As detailed for the two previous SPAs, there is no pathway for likely significant effects Lough Ree SPA, Mongan Bog SPA, River Little Brosna Callows SPA, All Saints Bog SPA, or Dovegrove Callows SPA regarding noise and visual disturbance of SCI species.

River Shannon Callows SAC is oversailed by the OHL between polesets 127 and 128 and is designated for the mobile Qualifying Interest (QI) otter, which may also occur in watercourses outside the bounds of the SAC. However, in the event where mobile QIs are present, the minor and temporary nature of the works mean that there is no potential for likely significant effects relating to visual and noise disturbance. This includes the substation works, which are minor in nature and will be carried out within the confines of the substation sites.

As described for River Shannon Callows SAC, the assessment for Lough Ree SAC follows the same rationale and there are no pathways for likely significant noise and visual disturbance of otter associated with Lough Ree SAC.

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.

#### **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.

Signed:



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Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

10 February 2026