



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1510 Remote End works in Castlebagot 220kV Station and Kilmahud 110kV Station [Exempted Development] County Dublin

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 CP1510 Remote End works in Castlebagot 220kV Station and the Kilmahud 110kV Station [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 comprises minor replacements of electrical equipment within the Castlebagot 220kV Station and the Kilmahud 110kV Station. All works are to be carried out entirely within the boundary of the existing energised substations.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

The closest European site to the Development is Rye Water Valley/Carton Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 001398¹) which is approximately 4.7km away ('as the crow flies'). The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the SAC comprise the Annex I habitat petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion), and the Annex II species narrow-mouthed whorl snail *Vertigo angustior* and Demoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*. However, there is no hydrological connectivity between the Development and the SAC. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection, likely significant effects from the Development on Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC regarding water quality are, therefore, excluded.

The nearest waterbody to the Development is a drain located approximately 10m south of the Castlebagot 220kV Station, identified on the Tailt Eireann PRIME2 Watercourses layer. This unnamed drain is hydrologically linked to Liffey_170² watercourse, which flows into the Grand Canal and River Liffey, then Dublin Bay, more than 20km downstream. South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) (site code 004024³), South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 000210⁴) and North Bull Island SPA (site code 004006⁵) are therefore theoretically within the outer Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the Development. However, given the minor and temporary works involved, the distance between the Development and Dublin Bay over which significant assimilation and adsporation of any pollutants would occur, there is no potential for likely significant effects on any of the SPAs or SAC.

South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA is approximately 15.4km from the Development and is designated for a variety of non-breeding waterbirds. Guidance published by NatureScot⁶ suggests that 20km is the maximum distance to which wintering waterbirds (in particular certain geese species) may travel outside of the boundary of an SPA for which they are a designated feature. Light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* is a mobile Special

¹ NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives: Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC 001398. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

² Environmental protection Agency (EPA) maps website <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> (accessed 17 January 2025).

³ 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.

⁴ NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: South Dublin Bay SAC 000210. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁵ NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: North Bull Island SPA 004006. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁶ Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (2016) Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

Conservation Interest (SCI) species of South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA and North Bull Island SPA that is associated with foraging habitat which may lie beyond the designated site boundary (also known as 'functionally-linked' habitats). However, all works will be carried out within the existing substation boundaries containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no habitats suitable for foraging SCI light-bellied brent goose.

Moreover, both substations are situated within industrial areas with extremely limited opportunities for foraging, and there is an extensive resource of suitable agricultural fields much closer to the SPAs. This, combined with the relatively minor nature of the works, mean that any noise disturbance of SCI birds occurring outside of the SPA boundary but in the vicinity of the Development will be immaterial. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the Development.

There are two further SPAs within 20km of the Development: Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004040⁷) and Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (site code 004063⁸). Wicklow Mountains is designated for breeding merlin *Falco columarius* and peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, which have core foraging ranges of 5km and 2km respectively. The Development is located approximately 13.2km from Wicklow Mountains SPA, beyond the core foraging range of both of the SCI species, and there is therefore no potential for likely significant effects on the SPA as a result of the Development. Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA is designated for greylag goose *Anser anser* and lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* and is located approximately 15km from the Development.

However, as described for South Dublin Bay and River Estuary SPA and North Bull Island SPA, there is no potential for permanent loss of functionally-linked habitat which could be used by greylag goose, and any disturbance of foraging birds using functionally-linked habitat would have insignificant effects due to the availability of abundant alternative habitat between the Development and the SPA. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the Development.

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 applicable site 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.

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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⁷ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Wicklow Mountain SPA 004040. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁸ NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA [004063]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.