



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1533 Fibre-wrapping of 9.7km of Derrycarney–Portlaoise 110kV Overhead Line [Exempted Development] County Offaly

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 CP1533 Fibre-wrapping of 9.7km of the Derrycarney - Portlaoise 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 fibre wrap of 9.7km of Derrycarney-Portlaoise OHL from poleset 1 to poleset 46.

All works for the Development 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/effects are considered potentially relevant as a result of the Development:

- Disturbance of qualifying species (e.g. visual, noise, vibration or artificial light). According to published research¹, 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)² 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:

- Slieve Bloom Mountains Special Protection Area (SPA), site code 004160³. The closest poleset associated with the Development is between poleset 45 and poleset 46, located approximately 7.6km southeast of the SPA. The SPA is designated for breeding hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

There is no direct hydrological connectivity between the Development and any European site, and the Development will not involve any intrusive works. The Development is not within or hydrologically connected to a known freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* catchment. There is no potential for likely significant effects related to water quality on any European site.

Hen harriers have a core foraging range of 2km during the breeding season, with a maximum range of 10km¹. NatureScot⁴ guidance recommends a buffer zone of 300-750m during breeding. The Development is located well beyond a distance at which any likely significant effects on hen harrier breeding sites associated with Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA could occur. Additionally

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 29 April 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 21 April 2026).

³ NPWS (2022). Conservation Objectives: Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA 004160. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁴ NatureScot (2022). Disturbance Distances in Selected Scottish Bird Species - NatureScot Guidance. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/disturbance-distances-selected-scottish-bird-species-naturescot-guidance>

due the minor scale and temporary nature of the works, there will be no likely significant noise and visual disturbance of SCI birds either within the boundaries of Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA >7 km away or using potential functionally linked habitat in proximity to the Development.

While there are other SPAs located within 20 km of the Site, the Development is located beyond the core foraging range of the SCI species associated with these SPAs. There is therefore no likelihood of significant effects arising in relation to disturbance of mobile SCI species associated with these SPAs.

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 sites' 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:



Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

30 April 2026