



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination CP1547 Newbridge East Cable Uprate [Exempted Development] County 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, whether CP1547 Newbridge East Cable Uprate [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:

- Newbridge East - Newbridge 110kV circuit cable section: replace the existing 1.2km 1000mm² aluminium cable with a 1000mm² copper cable. Installation will be carried out via existing chambers.
- Newbridge East - Monread 110kV circuit cable section: replace the existing 1.2km 1000mm² aluminium cable with a 1000mm² copper cable. Installation will be carried out via existing chambers.
- Station works: in Newbridge 110kV station upgrade one line-in and bay conductor. In Monread 110kV station, upgrade one line dropper and bay conductor. New protection relays are also required for both circuits.

All station works will be carried out entirely within the boundaries of the existing energised substations, above ground on existing structures. Cable uprate works will be carried out via established underground chambers. A working area extending up to 1 metre in all directions around the joint bay footprint will be required to complete the works. Any ground disturbed during the works shall be reinstated. Access for machinery (including a dumper and digger) and a jointing container will be required at each location. Access routes may also require reinstatement, depending on ground conditions.

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:

- Loss of habitat outside of European sites but which supports Qualifying Interest (QI)/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species (i.e., loss of functionally linked habitats).
- 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 Special Protection Areas (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.

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 19 May 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 January 2026).

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

- Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (site code 004063³) is designated for the wintering SCIs greylag goose *Anser anser* and lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*. There is no hydrological connectivity between the SPA and the Development. The SPA is located the following distances from the various elements of the Development:
 - Monread 110 kV station: location 11.1km south-east. No hydrological connectivity.
 - Newbridge East - Newbridge and Newbridge East - Monread 110kV circuit cable sections - 14.7km south-east.
 - Newbridge 110 kV station: location 18.7km south-east. No hydrological connectivity.
- Wicklow Mountains SPA (site code 004063⁴) is designated for the Qualifying Interest (QI) species merlin (*Falco columbarius*) [A098] and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) [A103]. There is no hydrological connectivity between the SPA and the Development. The SPA is located the following distances from the various elements of the Development:
 - Newbridge East - Newbridge and Newbridge East - Monread: located approximately 20.8km south east from Wicklow Mountains SPA. No hydrological connectivity
 - Newbridge 110 kV station: located approximately 25.7km south east from Wicklow Mountains SPA. No hydrological connectivity
 - Monread 110 kV station: located approximately 16.8km south east from Wicklow Mountains SPA. No hydrological connectivity

Newbridge 110 kV station is located within the Barrow catchment, which has historical records of freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), but with their current status unknown. However, there is no hydrological connectivity between the Newbridge station and any Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for freshwater pearl mussel. Monread 110kV station and the Newbridge East-Newbridge and Newbridge East-Monread 110kV cable sections are not located within or hydrologically connected to any known freshwater pearl mussel catchments. There is therefore no potential for likely significant effects on freshwater pearl mussel associated with any European site as a result of the Development.

All works associated with the Development within the Newbridge 110kV and Monread 110kV substations will take place entirely within the existing substation boundaries, comprising hardstanding and electrical installation. These areas contain no suitable habitat for foraging SCI species associated with any SPA. SCI may occur outside their European site boundaries, and disturbance may occur at a distance up to 500m from any works. Given the minor nature of the Development, which will occur for a short period of time only, there is no possibility of likely significant effects relating to noise and visual disturbance of SCI birds using functionally linked lands associated with any SPA.

The works associated with the Newbridge East - Newbridge and Newbridge East - Monread 110kV circuit cable sections will be carried out at existing joint bay locations, with ground disturbance required to access these. A temporary working area extending up to 1m in all directions around each joint bay footprint will be required. All disturbed ground will be reinstated to its original condition following completion of the works. Access for machinery (including a dumper and digger) and a jointing container will be required at each location, with any access routes reinstated as necessary depending on ground conditions

Joint bays 1a and 1b are located within an agricultural field with potential suitable for foraging SCI species, with joint bays 2a and 2b located at the verge of a road, an area with no suitable habitat for foraging SCIs. The extent of disturbance will be very small, and the works will be temporary in nature, with habitats reinstated to their baseline condition post-construction. This, combined with the ample other suitable habitats in proximity to the SPA which would also be suitable for foraging by SCI species, mean there is no possibility of likely significant effects associated with loss of functionally linked habitat.

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

3 NPWS (2024). Conservation Objectives: Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA 004063. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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

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:



Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

19 June 2026