



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Ground Investigation Works for CP1574 Kellis-Kilkenny 110kV Refurbishment [Exempted Development] County Carlow and County Kilkenny

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, if the Ground Investigation (GI) Works CP1574 Kellis-Kilkenny 110kV Refurbishment ('the Development') individually or in combination with other plans or projects would be likely to have a significant effect (s) on a European site(s).

The works to inform the Development comprise of Intrusive Foundation Investigations (IFI) and Dynamic Probing (DP) for structures 1, 3, 6, 16, 22, 24, 41, 61, 77, 95, 98, 126, 131, 142, 151, 157, 164 only. The works require digging at the structure foundations with a tracked machine and taking concrete samples for testing.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

The following European sites are considered to be within the potential zone of influence (Zoi) of the works:

- River Barrow And River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 002161)¹. The closest structure associated with the works to the SAC is structure 61 (680m away) and Structure 41 is 98m from a drainage ditch which is hydrologically-linked 6.6km to the SAC. The SAC is designed for a range of Annex I habitats, and the Annex II species Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*, white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, otter *Lutra lutra*, salmon *Salmo salar*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, twaite shad *Alosa fallax fallax*, and Killarney fern *Vandenboschia speciosa*.
- River Nore Special Protected Area (SPA) (site code 004233)². The SPA is designated for the SCI species kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. The closest structure associated with the works to the SPA is structure 164 (1.9km away).

The works are of a nature which means that significant waterborne pollution events cannot occur, for example, no large excavations are required which could result in substantial volumes of sediment being generated. There is no potential for likely significant effects related to water quality on any European site given the minor works involved, and the distance between the structures requiring GI works and their surrounding waterbodies. The Development is located within a catchment with previous records of freshwater pearl mussel with the current status of the species unknown. There is currently no catchment of SAC populations present.

Potential noise and visual disturbance impacts on QI otter *Lutra lutra* of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC were also considered. Due to their extensive home ranges, otter are expected to frequently utilise resting places and holts along waterbodies beyond the European site boundary. Otter are nocturnal mammals, and no night-time works will be undertaken. The works will be set back more than 98m from hydrologically-linked waterbodies, will be

¹ NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

² NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: River Nore SPA 004233. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

temporary and short-term, and minor in nature. Thus, there is no potential for likely significant effects.

Kingfisher have been estimated to have a home range of 2.5km³. Although structure 164 is located 1.9km from the SPA, it is within the existing energised Kilkenny 110 kV Substation boundary. The substation contains hardstanding and electrical installations, which is unsuitable habitat for foraging kingfisher. Furthermore, given the limited scale, short duration, and the location of the structure works within the existing substation, there is no pathway for disturbance or other effects. Therefore, there is no likelihood for significant effects related to visual and noise disturbance of kingfisher.

There are no other European sites nearby or potentially connected to the Development works 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 works, 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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³ Musseau, R., Angelier, F., Bichet, C., Millet, M., Rousselle, C., Moreau, J., and Bustamante, P.C. (2023). Sensitivity of the European Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) to global change: evidence from home range features and contaminations by trace elements and organic pollutants, a case study in the marshes of Western Europe.