



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Ground Investigation Works for CP1635 Cow Cross-Whitegate 110kV OHL [Exempted Development] County Cork

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 CP1635 Cow Cross-Whitegate 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) ('the works') 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 comprise of Intrusive Foundation Investigations (IFI) at structures 1, 1A, 3, 35, 37, 39, 45, 51, 60, 64, 65, 80, 85, 88, 90 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 closest European sites to the works are Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA; site code 004030¹) and Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation (SAC; site code 001058²).

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. The works are not located within a freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* catchment. 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, their surrounding drainage ditches (if any) and the distance from the drainage ditches to the European sites themselves.

The works pose a potential risk to the Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of SPAs in the wider area surrounding it. According to published research³, the maximum distance that non-breeding bird species for which SPAs are designated will typically travel to forage is 20km from the designated site boundary. Cork Harbour SPA is the sole European site within 20km of the works that is designated for such mobile SCI bird species (located approximately 334m away at its closest). The closest structure requiring works to Cork Harbour SPA is adjacent to a national road and is in an area of residential homes, which are associated with its own visual and noise disturbance profile (e.g. moving cars).

It is considered that there will be no likely significant effects on SCI bird species regarding visual and noise disturbance for the following reasons:

- The works will be undertaken sequentially, such that potential disturbance will only affect small sections of functionally-linked habitats at any given point in time;
- The duration of the works will be temporary and short-lived;

¹ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

² NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

³ SNH (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 – June 2016.

- There is an extensive supply of alternative suitable foraging habitats (particularly arable farmland and pasture) available in the wider area surrounding Cork Harbour SPA, which will be available for continued use by the relevant SCI species; and
- All agricultural parcels potentially used by SCI species are subject to inter-annual variation in suitability depending on the cropping regime deployed by farmers, meaning that individual fields may not be usable by SCI species at the time that works are undertaken. Furthermore, disturbance (of similar magnitude to that potentially caused by the works) is a natural element of routine farming operations, potentially rendering foraging habitats unsuitable to SCI bird species.

The potential impacts of the works are small and will occur over a short period of time such that there is no potential for likely significant effects and no possibility of the impacts of other projects or plans acting in-combination.

There are no other European sites nearby or potentially connected to the 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 works, 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

18th September 2026