



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1641 Knockanure 220kV Station Works [Exempted Development] County Kerry

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 CP1641 Knockanure 220kV Station Works [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 minor works within Knockanure 220kV Station. All works for the Development are to be carried out entirely within the boundary of the existing energised substation, above ground on existing structures. No vegetation clearance or intrusive works will be required for the Development.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

Based on the works involved, the following possible impacts are considered potentially relevant to the Development:

- Disturbance of qualifying species, birds and mammals (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 (SPA) 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:

- Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165³), located c. 1km southwest of the Development. Designated for the Annex I habitats sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, estuaries, mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, coastal lagoons, large shallow inlets and bays, reefs, perennial vegetation of stony banks, vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts, *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand, Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*), Mediterranean salt meadows *Juncetalia maritimi*, water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculum fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation, Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinia caerulea*), and alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*). The SAC is also designated for the Qualifying Interest (QI) species freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, salmon *Salmo salar*, common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* and otter *Lutra lutra*. The closest watercourse to the Development is the FEALE_070, located approximately 41m from the Development. While

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 January 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).

³ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

this watercourse flows downstream towards the SAC, all works will be confined to the existing station boundary, and no pathway exists by which the Development could affect the watercourse.

- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (site code 004161⁴), located c. 1.4km southeast of the Development. Designated for breeding hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*. There is no hydrological connection between the SPA and the Development.
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (site code 004077⁵), located c. 14.2km northwest of the Development. Designated for breeding and wintering Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, and wintering whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Wigeon *Mareca Penelope*, teal *Anas crecca*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, Scaup *Aythya marila*, Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, knot *Calidris canutus*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, and wetland habitats. There is no hydrological connection between the SPA and the Development.

Hydrological Connectivity and Water Quality

While the Development is located within the Feale catchment, which supports extant populations of freshwater pearl mussel not associated with any SAC.

As all works will be undertaken entirely within the existing station boundary and comprise minor works only, there is no source-pathway-receptor linkage between the Development and any downstream European site. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects on any European site in relation to water quality.

Disturbance to Qualifying Interest Species

Lower River Shannon SAC is located c. 1km southwest of the Development. Otter is a QI species of the SAC and may utilise habitats outside the SAC boundary as functionally linked habitat. However, the Development comprises minor, temporary works undertaken entirely within the footprint of the existing substation. No works will extend beyond the station boundary or affect habitats that could be used by otter or other mobile QI species. Given the separation distance between the Development and the SAC, and the limited nature of the Development, there is no potential for disturbance effects on otter or other mobile QI species associated with the SAC. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects on any qualifying interests of the Lower River Shannon SAC.

Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA is designated for hen harrier. Hen harrier has a core foraging range of 2km during breeding season, with a maximum range of 10km¹. However, habitats between the Development and the SPA are predominantly intensively managed agricultural land, which do not provide suitable nesting habitat for hen harrier. All works associated with the Development will take place within the existing substation boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no suitable habitat for hen harrier. Furthermore, the Development is well beyond the 300-750m buffer zone recommended by NatureScot for the species during breeding⁶. Given the distance of the Development from the SPA and 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 the SPA or using potential functionally linked habitat in proximity to the Development.

River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is designated for breeding and wintering cormorant and a range of wintering waterbirds, including the long-ranging species whooper swan and light-bellied brent goose, which may use agricultural grasslands and other inland habitats as ex-situ feeding areas. Whilst agricultural grassland occurs around the Development,

⁴ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA 004161. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁵ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁶ 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>

the Development is limited to works within the existing station boundary and there will be no ground disturbance, vegetation clearance or any alteration of habitats. The core foraging range of whooper swan and light-bellied brent goose is less than 5km and up to 15km⁷ respectively. While the Development lies beyond the core foraging range of whooper swan and towards the upper limit of the core foraging range of light-bellied Brent goose, there is extensive suitable supporting habitat available between the SPA and the Development and no potentially suitable habitat will be affected by the Development. The other SCI species of the SPA are waterbirds, with no suitable habitat in the vicinity of the Development. Given the separation distance, the minor and temporary nature of the Development, and the absence of any impacts to potentially suitable supporting habitat, there is no pathway for likely significant effects on SCI birds associated with the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

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 site's 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

18 August 2026

⁷ Light-bellied brent goose is not specifically included as a selected species in NatureScot guidance. However, research on brent geese is used as a proxy for barnacle geese *Branta leucopsis*, thus the buffer zone for the latter species (core range 15km) is taken to be appropriate for light-bellied brent geese.