



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Powering Up Offshore South Coast (PUOSC) Project: Non-Intrusive Archaeological surveys above High Water Mark [Exempted Development] (Counties Cork and Wexford)

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 PUOSC Non-Intrusive Archaeological surveys above High Water Mark [Exempted Development] ('the Works') individually or in-combination with other plans or projects will result in likely significant effects on a European site(s).

The Works are located at, and in the vicinity of five candidate landfall sites for the Powering Up Offshore Southcoast project, namely:

- Ballycrenane Beach and Ballycraheen Beach (Co. Cork)
- Blackhall Beach, the Long Gap Beach, and Carnivan Beach (Co. Wexford)

The Works comprise:

- Non-intrusive walkover inspections above the High Water Mark at all five candidate landfall sites; and,
- Non-intrusive metal detection surveys above the High Water Mark at all five candidate landfall sites¹; and
- Non-intrusive use of drone surveys where required to complement visual inspections and metal detection survey data.

Analysis of Pathways to European Sites

The proximity of each landfall site to potentially relevant European sites is set out in Table 1. Two Works locations (Carnivan Beach; the Long Gap Beach) are located within European sites.

¹ Under licence from the National Monuments Service (Consent Number 25R0215)

Table 1: Proximity of Landfall sites to Potentially Relevant European sites (European sites overlapping sites are bold underlined)

Landfall Site	Nearest Special Area of Conservation	Nearest Special Protection Area	Other More Distant Sites of Potential Relevance
Blackhall Beach	Ballyteige Burrow SAC (NPWS, 2014 ²) (c. 1.4 km)	Keeragh Islands SPA (NPWS, 2022 ³) (c. 0.9 km)	Hook Head SAC (NPWS, 2025 ⁴) (c. 2.7 km)
The Long Gap Beach	Hook Head SAC (NPWS, 2025) (c. 0.2 km)	Keeragh Islands SPA (NPWS, 2022) (c. 2.5 km)	Bannow Bay SPA (NPWS, 2012 ⁵) (c. 1.3 km)
Carnivan Beach	Hook Head SAC (NPWS, 2025) (<u>Works within SAC</u>)	Seas Off Wexford SPA (NPWS, 2024 ⁶) (<u>Works within SPA</u>)	Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (NPWS, 2024 ⁷) (c. 22.2 km). Blackwater River SAC/SPA (NPWS, 2012) (c. 13 km) ⁸
Ballycrenane Beach	Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pilmore) SAC (NPWS, 2015) ⁹ (c. 3.9 km)	Adjoins Ballycotton Bay SPA (NPWS, 2014) ¹⁰	N/A
Ballycroneen Beach	Great Island Channel SAC (NPWS, 2014) ¹¹ (c. 8.4 km)	Cork Harbour SPA (NPWS, 2014) ¹² (c. 4.5 km)	N/A

Direct Damage to Habitats

The Works at Carnivan Beach are partially within the Hook Head SAC and Seas off Wexford SPA. The Seas off Wexford SPA is not designated for any Special Conservation Interest habitats. The Hook Head SAC is primarily designated for habitats and species below the High Water Mark. The Works will locally overlap with a short 15m section of QI vegetated Sea Cliff Habitat. Given the relatively short survey duration (maximum 2 days), having regard for the targets of relevant attributes, there is no potential for the localised trampling arising from visual inspections and metal detection surveys to have Likely Significant Effects on QI Seacliff habitat.

The Works at other landfalls do not overlap with the boundaries of European sites, so there is no potential for direct damage to QI habitats.

Hydrological/Pollution Pathways

There will be no breaking of ground (which could generate silt or other materials), and no storage of oils, fuels, or other materials required for any of the works. As such there is no potential for Likely Significant (pollution) Effects on any European sites.

² NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Ballyteige Burrow SAC 000696. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

³ NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Keeragh Islands SPA 004118. First order Conservation Objectives. Version 1.0 National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

⁴ NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Hook Head SAC 000764. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁵ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Bannow Bay SPA 004033. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁶ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Seas off Wexford SPA 004237. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁷ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Mid-Waterford Coast SPA 004193. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁸ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC 002170. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

⁹ NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pilmore) SAC 000077. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹⁰ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1.

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

¹¹ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

¹² NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Disturbance Pathways to Mobile Species

Breeding SCI Species

- The works at Carnivan Beach within the Hook Head SAC include (designated QI) cliff habitats). Whilst the QI cliff habitats are not designated as an SPA, they are known to offer potential habitat to nesting peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* (NPWS, 2024¹³), so the potential for peregrine falcon populations associated with distant SPAs was assessed. Data for the 2024 breeding bird season collected on behalf of EirGrid¹⁴ has identified no breeding peregrine at Carnivan beach within the Zone of Influence of disturbance from the Works.
- The 2024 EirGrid Data at Carnivan Beach did identify 'possible' nesting by chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, which is a Special Conservation Interest of the Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (22.4km distant). Chough nests sites, if present, could be sensitive to human presence, and/or drone noise.
- However, the Works will be completed during winter 2025/2026, outside of the bird breeding season. As such, there is **no potential for Likely Significant (disturbance) Effects to mobile designated breeding peregrine or chough populations of SPAs.**

Wintering SCI Species

- The Works at Ballycraheen Beach adjoin the Ballycotton Bay SPA designated for a suite of wintering bird species. Data for the 2024/2025 wintering bird season collected on behalf of EirGrid¹⁵ identified low tide and coastal grassland feeding populations of four species (two gulls and two waders) which are SCIs of the Ballycotton Bay SPA within the Zone of Influence of disturbance from the Works.
- High Tide roosts serving an SPA are often limited in number and extent. Roosting birds are at an elevated risk of significant disturbance compared to feeding birds, since feeding sites are numerous and spatially extensive. Importantly no High Tide roosting sites were identified within the Zone of Influence of disturbance from the Works. Of the (feeding) SCI birds recorded, importantly, populations within the Zone of Influence¹⁶ did not equate to significant proportions of the populations for which the Ballycotton Bay SPA was designated¹⁷
- Furthermore, the Works at Ballycraheen Beach will be completed within two days, and during daylight hours only.
- As such, given the modest numbers of birds within the Zone of influence of and the short duration of disturbance, **there is no potential for Likely Significant (disturbance) Effects to mobile designated wintering bird populations of SPAs.**

QI Species

- Irish otter *Lutra lutra* populations occasionally occupy underground breeding or resting sites in Coastal habitats such as dunes¹⁸, and an active otter holt was identified at Ballycraheen Beach in summer 2025.

¹³ NPWS (2024) Site Synopsis for Hook Head SAC. Version date: 20.03.2024

¹⁴ Collected by suitably qualified ornithologists; data unpublished at the time of writing.

¹⁵ Collected by suitably qualified ornithologists; data unpublished at the time of writing.

¹⁶ As a % of the relevant SCI population of the Ballycotton Bay SPA, populations within the Zone of Influence amounted to 2% (lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*), 5% (ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*) 11 % (Curlew *Numenius arquata* 17% (turnstone *Arenaria interpres*))

¹⁷ For turnstone and ringed plover SPAs are designated with reference to the proportion of the relevant '1% All-Ireland Population Estimates'. For gulls (not adequately counted by national bird surveys), peak counts for the relevant SPA can be obtained from NPWS Conservation Objective supporting documents.

¹⁸ Fennelly, R.N., 2017. Some observations on Irish otter holts. *The Irish Naturalists' Journal*, 35(2), pp.150-151.

- The closest SAC to the Works which is designated for QI otter is the Great Island Channel SAC (9.5km from the holt at Ballycroneen). However, all works are non-intrusive, with no breaking of ground, such that no underground sites would be at risk of collapse from the Works. Works will be conducted during daylight hours when otter are generally less active, and at reduced risk of disturbance due to human presence. Given the nature of the works, there is **no potential for Likely Significant (disturbance) Effects to mobile QI otter bird populations from the Works.**

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 Works 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 the temporary nature of works, and has not taken account of mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



Robert Fennelly CEcol MCIEEM Lead Senior Ecologist

01 December 2025