



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Powering Up Offshore South Coast (PUOSC) Project: Site Investigations 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 Site Investigations 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 (from west to east):

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

The Works comprise:

- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), and Seismic Resistivity Tomography (SRT) above the High Water Mark at all five candidate landfall sites; and,
- Drone surveys at all five candidate landfall sites (at a height of c. 80m Above Ordnance Datum).

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.

Table 1: Proximity of Landfall sites to Potentially Relevant European sites (Overlapping sites **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 ¹) (c. 1.4 km)	Keeragh Islands SPA (NPWS, 2022 ²) (c. 0.9 km)	Hook Head SAC (NPWS, 2025 ³) (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 ⁴) (c. 1.3 km)
Carnivan Beach	Hook Head SAC (NPWS, 2025) (<u>Works within SAC</u>)	Seas Off Wexford SPA (NPWS, 2024 ⁵) (<u>Works within SPA</u>)	Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (NPWS, 2024 ⁶) (c. 22.2 km). Blackwater River SAC/SPA (NPWS, 2012) (c. 13 km) ⁷
Ballycrenane Beach	Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pilmore) SAC (NPWS, 2015) ⁸ (c. 3.9 km)	Adjoins Ballycotton Bay SPA (NPWS, 2014) ⁹	N/A
Ballycroneen Beach	Great Island Channel SAC (NPWS, 2014) ¹⁰ (c. 8.4 km)	Cork Harbour SPA (NPWS, 2014) ¹¹ (c. 4.5 km)	N/A

Direct Damage to Habitats

The Works at Carnivan Beach are within the Hook SAC and Seas off Wexford SPA. However, the Works are non-intrusive¹² are not proposed within the known locations for any Qualifying Interest habitats of either European site. Qualifying Interest (QI) vegetated sea cliff habitats adjoin the survey locations, but no GPR or SRT surveys are proposed on (steeply sloping) QI sea cliff habitat. No other Works locations overlap European sites. There is no potential for Likely Significant habitat damage effects.

Hydrological/Pollution Pathways

As the Works are all located at beaches, there is no potential for hydrological connectivity with upstream freshwater designated sites. There is QI reef habitat in subtidal areas in proximity to the Works at Carnivan Beach. However is no potential for Likely Significant (pollution) Effects to arise from the Works via overland flow of pollutants into subtidal reef habitats, because they are non-intrusive in nature¹², and the only fuel/oil source for the Works is the (Argocat All Terrain) vehicle which will access and undertake surveys on the Beach above the High Water Mark. There

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

² 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

³ NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: Hook Head SAC 000764. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁴ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Bannow Bay SPA 004033. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁵ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Seas off Wexford SPA 004237. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁶ NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Mid-Waterford Coast SPA 004193. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

⁷ 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

⁸ NPWS (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pilmore) SAC 000077. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

⁹ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Ballycotton Bay SPA 004022. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

¹⁰ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Great Island Channel SAC 001058. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

¹¹ NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives: Cork Harbour SPA 004030. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

¹² Neither the insertion by hand, of small spikes, to secure the geophones (SRT), nor the use of a sledgehammer on the strike plate is considered 'intrusive', in the context of potential risk to European sites

is no requirement for storage or use of fuels or oils at any landfall site. As such there is no potential for Likely Significant (pollution) Effects on any European sites via pollution.

Disturbance Pathways to Mobile Species

The works at Carnivan Beach are located within the Hook Head SAC, which includes (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). However data for the 2024 breeding bird season collected on behalf of EirGrid¹⁴ has identified no breeding peregrine at Carnivan beach and environs. There is no potential for Likely Significant (disturbance) Effects to mobile designated breeding bird populations of SPAs.

The Works at Ballycrenane Beach adjoin the Ballycotton Bay SPA designated for a suite of wintering bird species. However the Works at Ballycrenane Beach will be completed during the summer months (and before the wintering September-March period). As such, there is no potential for Likely Significant (disturbance) Effects to mobile designated wintering bird populations of SPAs.

Irish otter populations occasionally occupy underground breeding or resting sites in Coastal habitats such as dunes¹⁵, and it is theoretically possible that otter could establish underground sites in sea cliff or other coastal habitats. However, even if otter are present, the works are non-intrusive (and conducted during daylight hours when otter are generally inactive), such that no underground sites would be at risk of collapse from the Works, nor from disturbance due to human presence. Furthermore, the closest SAC designated for otter is c. 13 km (Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC; Ballycrenane Beach). 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:



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