

Waterways Ireland

Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Reference: ARP-298123-00_AA

Issue | 24 June 2024



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Job number 298123-00

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Document Verification

Project title Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030
Document title Screening for Appropriate Assessment
Job number 298123-00
Document ref ARP-298123-00_AA
File reference 4-04-02

Revision	Date	Filename			
01	06/11/2023	Description	Draft 01 for Client Review		
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
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02	12/12/2023	Filename			
		Description	Draft 02 for Client Review		
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
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03	24/06/2024	Filename			
		Description	For Issue		
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
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Issue Document Verification with Document

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) on behalf of Waterways Ireland (WI) in connection with the draft Heritage and Biodiversity Plan (hereafter referred to as the ‘draft Plan’).

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that any plan or project, which is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site, but would be likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

1.2 Report Aim

This AA Screening Report has been prepared to provide information for the ‘public authority¹’ regarding the potential for ‘Likely Significant Effects’ (LSE) of the draft Plan, on European sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the draft Plan.

The draft Plan covers two jurisdictions, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This AA Screening report applies to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland jurisdictions for respective Habitat Regulations.

Following the exit of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland from the European Union in 2019, the Natura 2000 site network, which is the network of protected sites across the European Union, is now referred to as the UK National Site Network. For the purposes of this report, all sites that form part of the Natura 2000 site network (in Republic of Ireland) and the UK National Site Network (Northern Ireland) shall be collectively known as ‘European sites’.

The potential for likely significant effects on all European sites, across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are assessed within this report respective of the Regulations in both jurisdictions.

1.3 Draft Heritage & Biodiversity Plan

The draft Heritage and Biodiversity Plan (HBP) 2030 has been designed to conserve and enhance natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland. The draft Plan will work towards sustainable, transparent and accountable management of inland navigable waterways in line with the expectations and concerns of local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders. The draft Plan includes three Objectives and twelve Key Results to deliver this draft Plan to its completion.

1.4 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) (the ‘Habitats Directive’ provides the legal protection for habitats and species, with Articles 3 to 9 providing legislation protection to the EU wide network of sites known as the Natura 2000 site network. Natura 2000 is a network of protected sites which comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (referred to as European sites within this report). SACs are protected sites designated under the Habitats Directive. They are high quality sites that contribute significantly to the conservation of a large range of habitats and species.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA whilst Article 6(4) sets out the Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and compensatory measures where Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European sites cannot be excluded.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into:

- Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended), and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). In the context of the draft Plan, the governing legislation is principally the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No 477/2011) as amended by S.I. 293/2021 (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).; and
- Northern Irish law by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, updated following the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union in 2019, the exit regulations, the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.)(Amendment)(Northern Ireland)(EU Exit) Regulations 2019 provided for the legal continuity following Brexit (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).

For the purposes of this report, both sets of legislation will be collectively referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

Under the Habitats Regulations, prior to submitting for approval a plan that is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of either a SPA or SAC, public authorities¹ are required to consider whether the plan may have a significant effect on such a site; and where this is the case, that an AA of the LSE must be carried out.

1.5 Relationship with the SEA Directive

In the preparation of this AA Screening report, the approach has been conducted in parallel with the requirements of the SEA process (2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law). Article 3.2(b) of the SEA Directive expressly links to AA. The SEA process requires that an environmental report is prepared to accompany a draft plan for public consultation. Following the consultation period, the plan may be finalised in its issue form. To facilitate an informed assessment under both processes, it is necessary to consider both the draft and final versions of the plan.

1.6 Report Structure

The report is structured below:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the draft Plan;
- Section 3 outlines the AA process and provides important definitions;
- Section 4 outlines the guidance, data and methodology used to inform the assessment;
- Section 5 sets out the European sites under consideration;
- Section 6 details the assessment for effects and screening;
- Section 7 provides a summary and conclusion.

¹ As per the Habitats Regulations (SI 477/2011), “Public authority” means “(s) Waterways Ireland”. As per the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) part 7 “(7) The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.”

2. The Draft Heritage & Biodiversity Plan

2.1 Overview

WI have developed the draft HBP 2030 to conserve and enhance natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland. It is the second HBP to be prepared by WI. The plan is part of proactive action by WI to manage the waterways and to develop appropriate strategies for their conservation, interpretation and promotion.

The HBP will work towards sustainable, transparent and accountable management of inland navigable waterways in line with the expectations and concerns of local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders. WI has identified three different types of Waterway Heritage Assets – (1) Natural heritage, (2) Archaeological, architectural & industrial heritage and (3) Cultural heritage. This classification aids in illustrating the importance of the objectives within the draft Plan as well as to prioritise them.

2.2 Draft Plan Objectives

The draft Plan objectives have been set forward, following the Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) goal-setting framework. The OKRs are to be implemented annually through a programme of actions.

Objective 1: Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge

The three Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to the publication of data, research initiatives for heritage and biodiversity and the integration of data with decision making processes. The Objective has further identified four impact areas for the OKRs: open-source heritage and biodiversity data, informed management and investment decisions, informed decision-making and compliance, and risk reduction.

Objective 2: Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities and external partnerships, to support alignment with the UN SDGs

The five Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to training audits, skill and capacity building, implementation of best practice measures, communication strategy and partnerships. The Objective has further identified four impact areas for the OKRs: internal capacity, building strategic approach to WI, custodian role and reporting on alignment with SDGs.

Objective 3: Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways.

The four Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to increasing public engagement with WI, increasing support with community organisations and stakeholders, sharing digital heritage resources and feedback gathering initiatives. The Objective has further identified two impact areas for the OKRs: community groups are activated, and heritage assets are animated, and community groups are more empowered to engage with Waterways Heritage OKRs.

2.3 Geographic Area

The geographical area covered by the draft Plan is waterways under WI remit within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (shown in Figure 1 below).

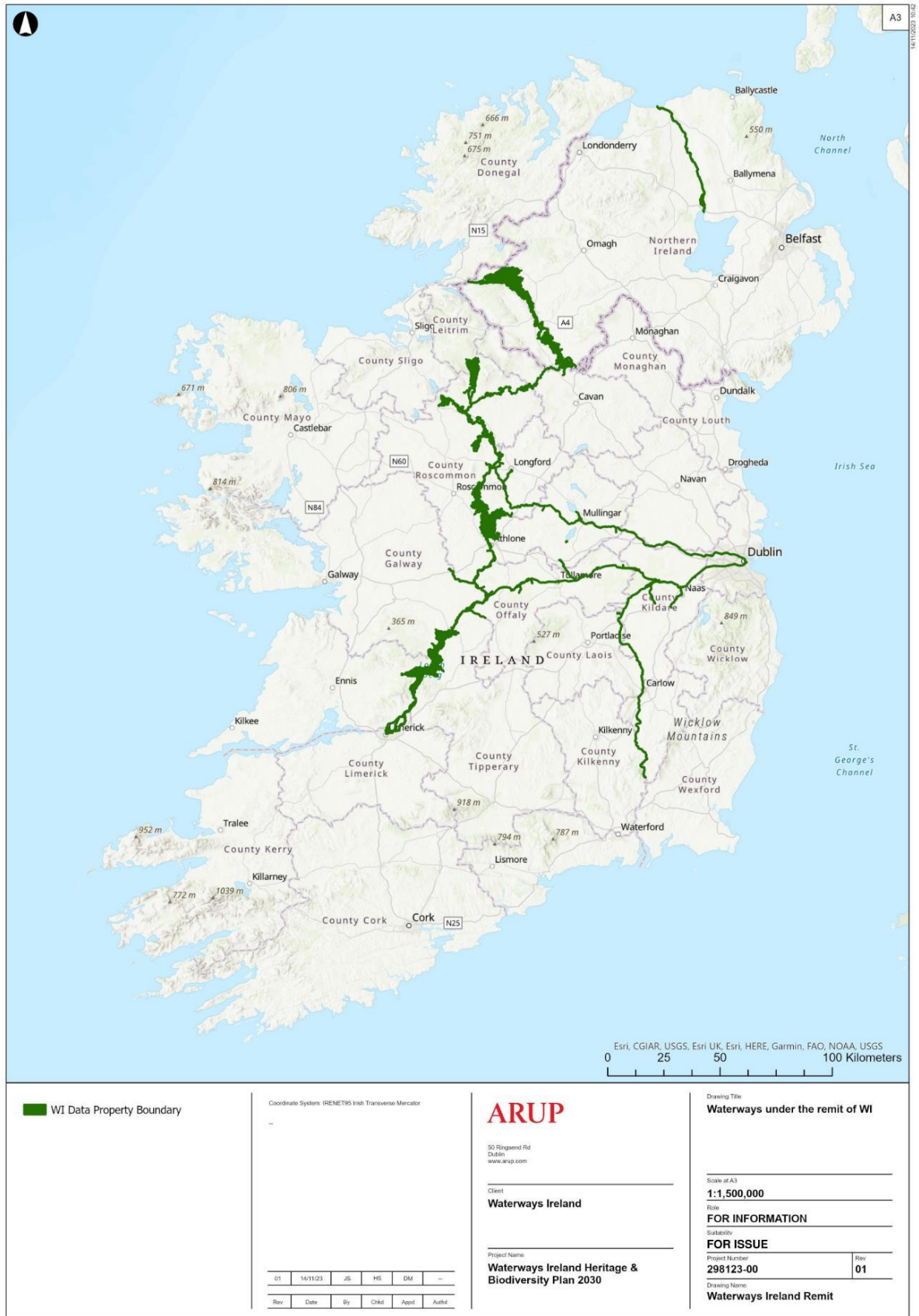


Figure 1 Waterways under WI remit in the Heritage & Biodiversity draft Plan 2030

3. Appropriate Assessment Process

3.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages

The AA process involves a number of steps and tests that need to be applied in sequential order.

An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. The four stages are shown in Figure 2. Stages 1 and 2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Stage 3 may be part of Article 6(3) or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

Screening for AA, for which this report provides the relevant information, is the first step in this process. This is required to establish, on the basis of objective information, whether the draft Plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, has the potential for likely significant effect on a European site.

The Screening for AA must include a final determination by the public authority¹ as to whether or not a proposed project would adversely affect the integrity of a European site. In order to reach a final determination, the public authority must undertake examination, analysis and evaluation, followed by findings, conclusions and a final determination.

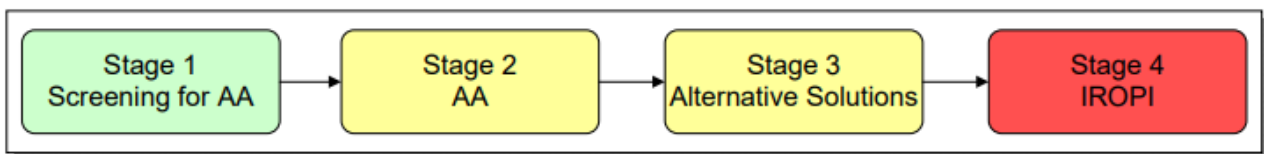


Figure 2 Stages in the AA Process

3.2 Definitions

3.2.1 European Sites

European sites, as defined under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011)(as amended) are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as SACs, candidate SACs (cSACs), SPAs or proposed SPAs (pSPAs). These are sometimes referred to as Natura 2000 sites.

SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I² habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II³ species (other than birds).

SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and all migratory birds and their habitats.

The Annex habitats and species, for which each site is selected, are termed the Qualifying Interests (QI) for SACs and termed Special Conservation Interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site.

3.2.2 Conservation Objective

Conservation Objectives (COs) for the European sites are defined for the relevant QIs and SCIs. In its most general sense, a CO is the specification of the overall target for the species and/or habitat types for which a site is designated in order for it to contribute to maintaining or reaching favourable conservation status⁴.

² Annex I habitats are habitats whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

³ Annex II species are animal and plant species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

⁴ Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites (November 2012) European Commission, Doc. Hab.12-04/06. Accessed at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/commission_note/commission_note2_EN.pdf

3.2.3 Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The Source-Pathway-Receptor model is used to assess where a potential effect may result by examining the source, its pathway and the receptor. As per guidance from the OPR⁵ these can be defined as follows:

- **Source:** The origin of a potential effect which may include characteristics of a plan or project that have the potential to result in effects e.g. direct impacts such as loss of habitat;
- **Pathway:** How the potential effect may occur on the source. These are identifiable through linkages that may occur through the plan or project and European sites e.g. direct pathways such as physical proximity, hydrological connections or indirect pathways such as disturbance to migrating species; and
- **Receptor:** The European site network and respective QIs/SCIs, their ecological condition and sensitivities e.g. freshwater pearl mussel is sensitive to siltation in water.

3.2.4 Zone of Influence

A Zone of Influence (ZoI) within any assessment of projects and/or plans considers the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the proposed plan/project and associated activities.

⁵ OPR (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01

4. Methodology

4.1 Guidance

The following guidance was used in carrying out the Assessment:

- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2021);
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2019);

Republic of Ireland specific:

- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021); and
- Strict Protection of Animal Species Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority (NPWS 2021);
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;

Northern Ireland specific:

- Guidance explaining The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

The requirements for Screening for AA, and AA, for European sites, are set out in Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011) with numerous relevant rulings and opinions issues in both Irish and EU courts. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive as transposed by the aforementioned Regulations as stated within Section 1.4.

4.2 Data Sources

The ecological data reviewed to inform this report comprises:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Map Viewer⁶;
- EPA- Ireland's Environment. An Integrated Assessment 2020 Article 12 web tool⁷;
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee UK Protected Areas⁸;
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Protected Areas web viewer⁹;

⁶ EPA Map Viewer accessed at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> accessed November 2023

⁷ Article 12 of the Birds Directive Web tool accessed at <https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/> accessed November 2023

⁸ JNCC Protected Areas web viewer accessed at <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-protected-areas/> accessed November 2023

⁹ NIEA Protected Areas web viewer <https://gis.daera-ni.gov.uk/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bb721449cb8949e7a4f90c722bd2d80b> accessed November 2023

- NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives Series¹⁰;
- NPWS (2023) SAC and SPA Datasheets¹¹;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations web viewer¹²;
- NPWS Protected Sites in Ireland¹³;
- NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland Web Viewer¹⁴;
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report¹⁵. NPWS (2019);
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report¹⁶. Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O’Neil. NPWS (2019); and
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report¹⁷ (2019). Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O’Neill (2020).

4.3 Methodology

In line with the relevant guidance and case law, this stage of the AA consists of the below steps:

1. Impact Prediction: Identify the aspects of the draft Plan likely to affect the COs of European sites. The more general classification of impacts can include direct and indirect effects; short and long-term effects; construction, operational and decommissioning effects; and isolated, interactive and cumulative effects. A Source-Pathway-Receptor model has been used to identify the zone of influence. This also includes transboundary considerations.
2. Assessment of Effects: The actions of the draft Plan are assessed as to whether they are likely to result in adverse effects on the integrity of European sites. This requires understanding of relevant QIs/SCIs and associated COs.

4.3.1 Impact Prediction: Identifying the Zone of Influence

The ZoI is established using the source-pathway-receptor framework and takes into consideration the national scale of the draft Plan. Historically, guidance pertaining to the ZoI (e.g. 2010 guidance on ‘Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland’) has recommended a 15km buffer from source of the impact, in the case of plans, for consideration of adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

However, this approach is evolving as it has become more recognised that a source-pathway-receptor model should be applied to individual ecological receptors on a case-by-case basis rather than applying a one-size fits-all buffer distance. For example, there is the potential that a QI of a European site (e.g. freshwater species) could be adversely affected by changes in water quality of distances further than 15km away from the source and conversely the scale and location of plan boundary might mean that potential for effects may be of significantly less distance than 15km.

¹⁰NPWS Conservation objectives accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives> accessed November 2023

¹¹NPWS SAC and SPA Datasheets accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/designated-site-data/sac-and-spa-datasheets-downloads> accessed November 2023

¹² NPWS Designations web viewer accessed at <https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8f7060450de3485fa1c1085536d477ba> accessed November 2023

¹³ NPWS Protected sites accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites> accessed November 2023

¹⁴ NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland web viewer accessed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1a721520030d404f899d658d5b6e159a> accessed November 2023

¹⁵ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland: Volume 1 Summary Overview accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf September 2023

¹⁶The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol2_Habitats_Article17.pdf September 2023

¹⁷ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol3_Species_Article17.pdf September 2023

The principle for establishing ZoI, as outlined in the 2021 OPR Practice Note PN01⁵, applies equally to a plan level AA and so the source-pathway-receptor model has been used in this report.

5. European Sites Under Consideration

5.1 European Site Network

The scope of the WI draft Plan has scale of application across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland due to the management of waterways both sides of the border.

No physical developments shall take place as a result of the draft Plan.

There are 441 SACs and 166 SPAs (inclusive of proposed SPAs) sites in the Republic of Ireland and there are 58 SACs, 16 SPAs and one candidate SPA within Northern Ireland. Figure 4 shows the location of all SACs and SPAs across the island of Ireland.

Conservation objectives can be accessed on www.npws.ie and www.daera-ni.gov.uk and have been considered as part of the screening process, but for the purposes of brevity, these have not been reproduced.

The European site network across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are shown below in Figure 3 European Sites in the Republic of Ireland and International sites in Northern Ireland.

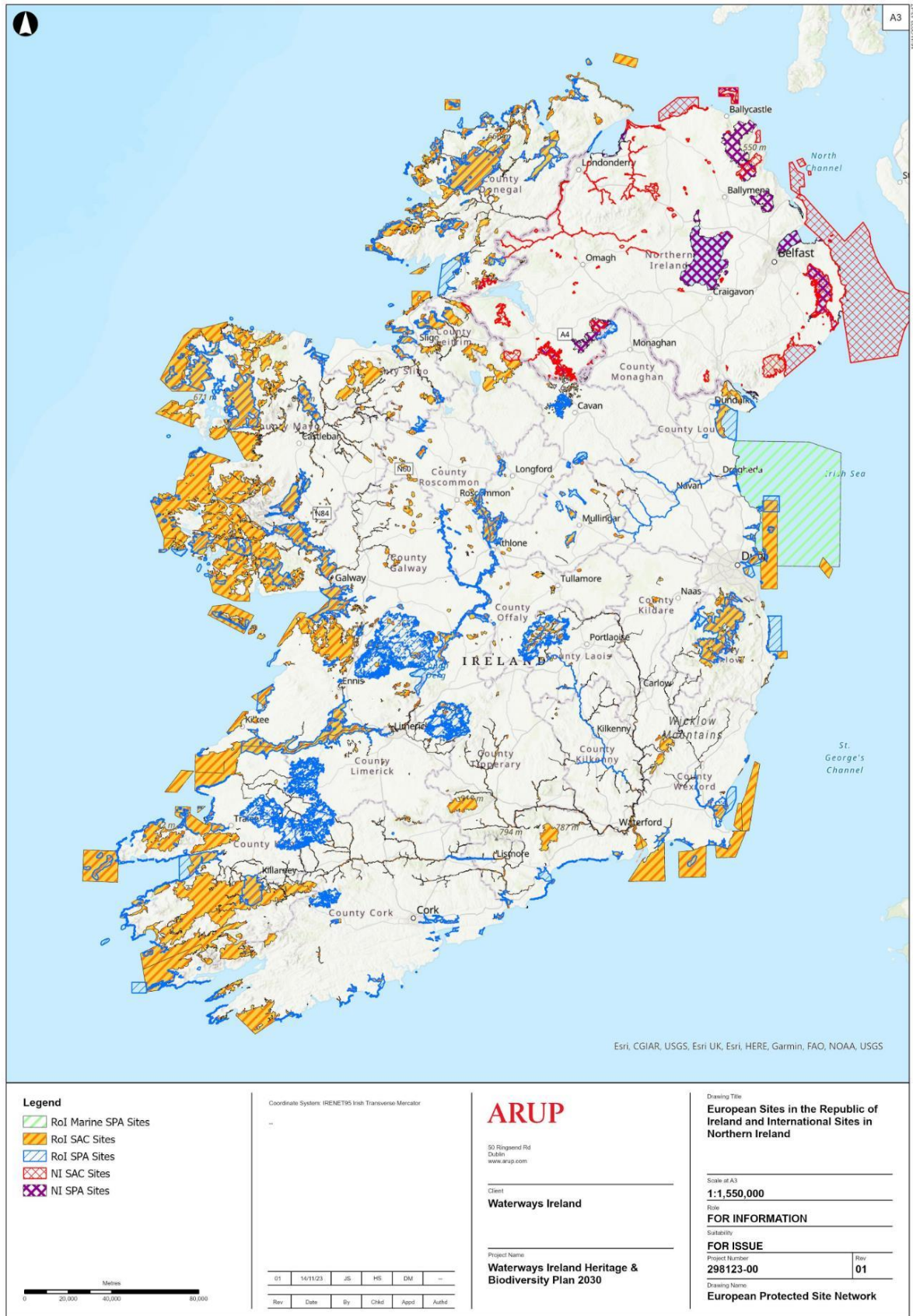


Figure 3 European Sites in the Republic of Ireland and International sites in Northern Ireland.

5.2 European Sites under Consideration

The ZoI of the draft Plan has been established through both the consideration of the source-pathway-receptor method and guidance of the 15km buffer. As WI remit pertains to waterways both within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, a hydrological pathway for effect has the potential to exist.

To establish the ZoI for the draft Plan, an initial 15km buffer from the boundary of WI's waterways was considered given the activities proposed in this plan. Due to the hydrological nature of waterways, European sites that are hydrologically connected downstream beyond the 15km buffer have also been considered as part of this assessment. Additionally, due to the presence and mobility of marine mammal species¹⁸ which are qualifying interests of Marine Protected Areas in Northern Ireland, the Maidens SAC and the North Channel SAC are further considered within this assessment.

Figure 4 European sites within the Zone of Influence of the waterways under Waterways Ireland remit below shows the European sites within the ZoI of the draft Plan.

¹⁸ Due to the presence of mobile marine mammals, Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) and Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) which are qualifying features of SACs within certain distances are included within assessment. SACs with Grey seals and/or Harbour porpoise within 100km of the plan and SACs with Harbour seals within 50km of the plan are considered.

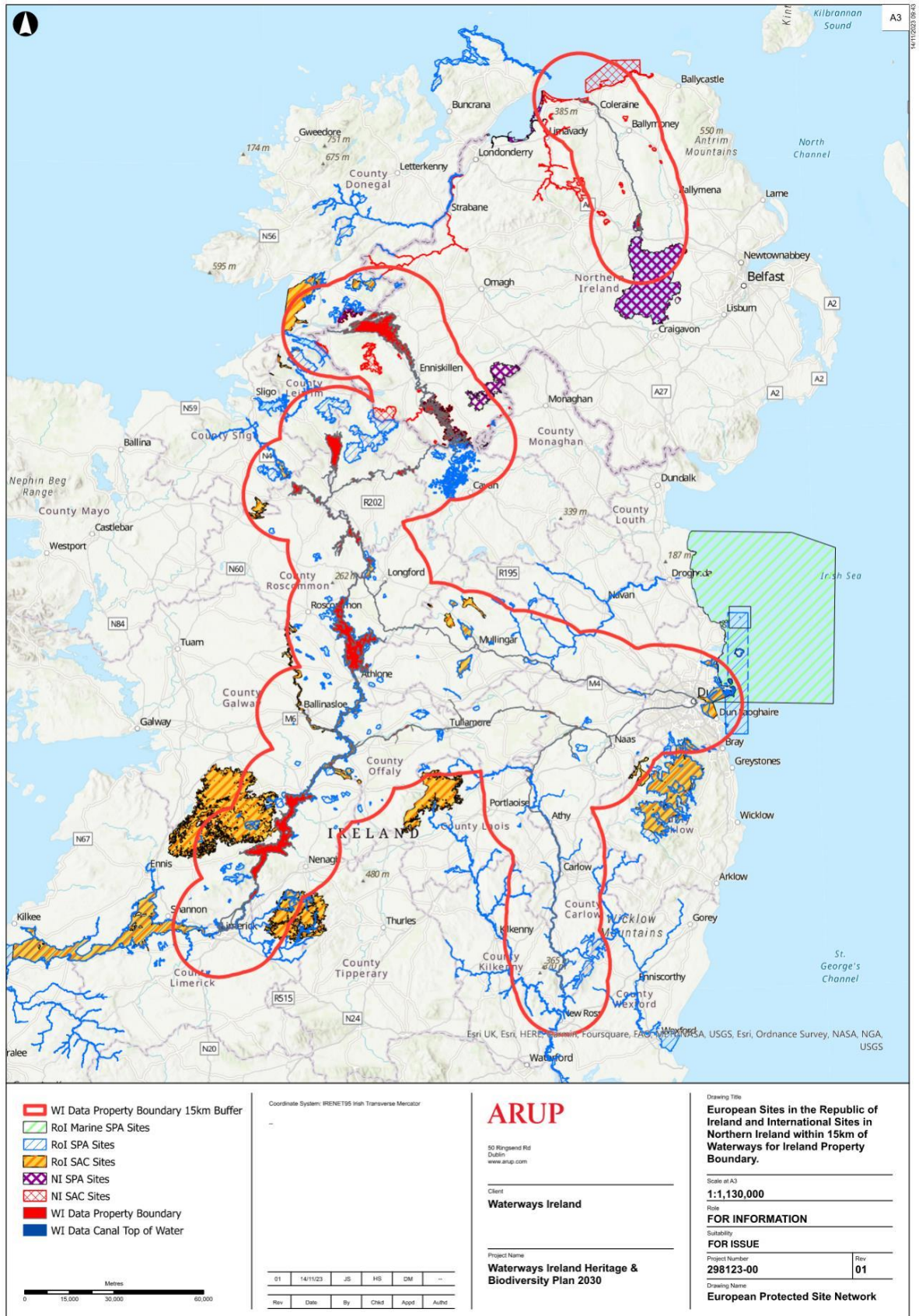


Figure 4 European sites within the Zone of Influence of the waterways under Waterways Ireland remit

6. Consideration of any Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European Sites

6.1 Overview

The process of screening for AA focuses on any interactions between the European site conservation objectives and the effects of implementing the draft Plan objectives.

The potential ZoI of the draft Plan would be expected to be limited to the areas shown in Figure 4 in Section 5.2. It is possible that these areas may overlap or be within proximity to European sites, through direct/indirect connectivity and possibly functionally linked land.

No physical developments are proposed within the draft Plan.

6.1.1 Screening Assessment

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of the draft Plan objectives, an assessment for likely significant effects and a screening assessment outcome.

Table 1 Summary of Screening for AA of the Draft Plan

Objective	Key Result	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
1. Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge.		<p>Developing openly accessible and high quality information platforms does not lie within the scope of management of European Sites.</p> <p>Developing a platform of high quality and openly accessible knowledge is a desk based activity that will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	1.1 Within the scope of this plan, all publishable data is made available in the year the data is collected.	<p>This Objective and adjoining Key Result is a desk-based activity relating to publishing data on an accessible platform and will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	1.2 Heritage research initiatives are progressed to underpin Waterways Ireland's role as custodians of heritage and biodiversity assets	<p>Progressing heritage research initiatives is a desk-based activity and will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	1.3 Data and knowledge is integrated across Waterways Ireland decision-making processes	<p>The incorporation of data and knowledge into decision making processes is a desk-based and communications based activity and will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out

Objective	Key Result	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
2. Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities and external partnerships, to support alignment with the UN SDGs		<p>This activity pertains to Waterways Ireland's internal management and organisation to ensure that heritage and biodiversity is, primarily, at the core of the organisations activities and partnerships and, secondly, in alignment with the UN SDGs.</p> <p>The activities required to carry out this objective are desk-based, with internal and external communications at its core. This objective will not result in any on-site activities and therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	2.1 A heritage and biodiversity training audit is developed for Waterways Ireland staff	<p>A training audit is a desk based activity that will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	2.2 Enhanced skills and capacity are available to Waterways Ireland and external stakeholders	<p>Provisioning support to Waterways Ireland and its external stakeholders is a desk based activity that will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	2.3 Best practice delivery of heritage, biodiversity and climate initiatives and partnerships	<p>The act of best practice in delivering this objective will not result in on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites related to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	2.4 Waterways Ireland communicates on the alignment of our activities with the UN SDGs	<p>The act of communication to ensure that Waterways Ireland's activities are in alignment with the UN SDGs will not result in on-site activities related to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	2.5 Establish and secure strategic partnerships with heritage organisations over the life of the Plan	<p>Establishing and securing partnerships with heritage organisations shall not result in on-site activities related to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
3. Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways		<p>The activities required to carry out this objective are desk-based, with internal and external communications at its core. This objective will not result in any on-site activities and therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	3.1 Increased numbers engaging with heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland	<p>This Key Result is anticipated to be as a result of online and in-person event engagement through heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland. It is not anticipated that the delivery method for these initiatives will result in any interaction with European sites.</p>	Screened Out

Objective	Key Result	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
		Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.	
	3.2 Increased support for, and engagement with, community organisations and other stakeholders promoting heritage and biodiversity initiatives	<p>This Key Result is anticipated to be as a result of online and in person engagement through heritage and biodiversity initiatives. It is not anticipated that the delivery method for these initiatives will result in any interaction with European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	3.3 Waterways Ireland digital heritage resources reach new audiences	<p>This Key Result is anticipated to be delivered through an online platform and shall not result in any on-site activities related to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out
	3.4 Feedback and insights are gathered from partners engaging with waterways heritage and biodiversity to inform our integrated management approach	<p>The gathering of feedback and information from engagement methods is not anticipated to result in any on-site activities related to European sites.</p> <p>Therefore the potential for likely significant effects on European sites does not exist.</p>	Screened Out

7. Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Summary

The draft Plan comprises of three Objectives and twelve associated Key Results aimed at conserving and enhancing the natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland.

As WI have remit over waterways in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the ZoI of the draft Plan extends over both jurisdictions. A precautionary buffer of 15km was placed on the waterways under the remit of WI to establish the ZoI. Sites beyond this buffer zone were also considered due to the hydrological pathway between the WI waterways and European sites.

Consistent with the Habitats Regulations, a plan or project is subject to a Screening for AA to establish the potential for likely significant effects on the European site network. The purpose of this AA Screening report is to provide the relevant information to the public authority (Waterways Ireland) to inform subsequent screenings for AA, pursuant to the Habitats Regulations as defined in Section 1.4.

7.2 Conclusion

The Objectives and associated Key Results of the draft Plan were assessed for the potential for likely significant effects on the European site network.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the best available information, and applying the precautionary principle, it can be concluded that the possibility of any significant effects on any European sites, whether arising from the plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded, for the reasons set out in Section 6.1.1 above. In reaching this conclusion, the nature of the plan and its potential relationship with all European sites within the ZoI, and their conservation objectives, have been fully considered.

Therefore it is the professional opinion of the authors of this report that this draft Plan does not require an AA.