



Cork
County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Passage West Pedestrian and Cycle Route

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

November 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

1.1 BACKGROUND

Ryan Hanley was commissioned by Cork County Council to prepare a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the Passage West Pedestrian and Cycle Route Project. The project sets out to upgrade an existing 2km long Pedestrian and Cycle Route between the Cork City/Cork County boundary and Mariner's Quay from a 2-2.5m wide to an approximate 4m wide pedestrian and cycle path.

The purpose of this AA Screening is to determine the potential adverse effects, if any, that the proposed path widening works may have, alone or in combination with other plans or projects on European Sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)), within the potential zone of influence of the works.

This report constitutes an Appropriate Assessment Screening in accordance with Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), for wastewater infrastructure works to be completed in County Cork as part of this project.

1.2 THE REQUIREMENT FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The requirement for Appropriate Assessment is set out in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in Article 6 (3) which states:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.”

The Habitats Directive is transposed in Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (consolidating the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities Birds and Natural Habitats and Control of Recreational Activities Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in recent Court of Justice of the European Union Judgements (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations) and the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010.

1.3 EUROPEAN SITES

There are two types of EU site designation, the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Special Protection Area (SPA). SACs are designated for the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats of European importance and SPAs for the conservation of bird species and habitats of European importance. These sites form part of “Natura 2000” a network of protected areas throughout the European Union.

Annex I of the Habitats Directive lists certain habitats that must be given protection. Certain habitats are deemed ‘priority’ and have greater protection. Irish habitats include raised bogs, active blanket bogs, turloughs, heaths, lakes and rivers. Annex II of the Directive lists species whose habitats must be protected and includes Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and White-clawed Crayfish (*Austroptamobius pallipes*).

The Birds Directive aims to protect all wild bird species naturally occurring within the European Union. Emphasis is placed on the protection of habitats for migratory and endangered species. Endangered species within the European Union are listed under Annex I of the Birds Directive. Member states must designate SPAs for the survival of Annex I species and for overwintering migratory birds.

1.4 THE AIM OF THIS REPORT

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared in accordance with current guidance and provides the information required in order to establish whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant adverse effects on the European Sites in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which the European Sites have been designated.

By undertaking the ecological impact assessment in a step-by-step manner in relation to the habitats and species of the European Sites, this report seeks to inform the screening process required as the first stage of the process pursuant to Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive.

2 THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2.1 STAGES OF ARTICLE 6 ASSESSMENT

The European Commission's guidance promotes a staged process, as set out below, the need for each being dependent upon the outcomes of the preceding stage.

- (1) Screening
 - (2) Appropriate Assessment
 - (3) Assessment of Alternative Solutions
 - (4) Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain.
- The "IROPI test" (Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest) and compensatory measures. See **Figure 2.2**.

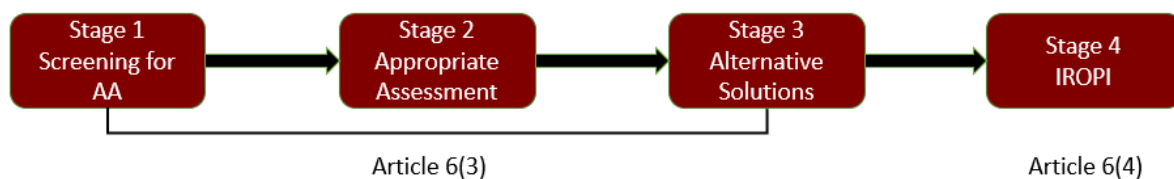


Figure 2.2: Stages of Appropriate Assessment

Within this staged process a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, and compensatory measures is promoted by the Habitats Directive.

Stage 1 of the process is intended to identify whether the project is 'likely to have a significant effect' upon a European site, referred to as 'Screening for Appropriate Assessment'.

If the screening process identifies effects to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening is undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan or project. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at screening stage on grounds of no impact.

Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2010 states that; "the competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of the proposed development is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site."

Stage 2 of the process considers any potential impacts in greater detail including whether further mitigation measures are required. If an adverse impact upon the site's integrity cannot be ruled out then Stage 3 will need to be undertaken to assess whether alternative solutions exist. If no alternatives exist that have a lesser effect upon the European Site/s in question, the project can only be implemented if there are 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest', as detailed in Article 6(4). In essence, the work at Stage 1 will determine whether further stages of the process are required.

This report includes the testing required under Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

2.2 GUIDANCE

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) defines the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of certain plans and projects. In order to inform the requirements of this Screening Report the following guidance documents have been referred to:

- DoEHLG Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities;
- DoEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environmental Heritage and Local Government;
- European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission (2000) Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;
- European Commission (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/49/EEC; clarification of the concepts of: Alternative solutions, Imperative reasons of overriding public interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission;
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No.477 of 2011); and
- Office of the Planning Regulator (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01. March 2021.

2.3 REPORT FORMAT

In complying with the obligations under Article 6(3) and to be consistent with the Guidance for Planning Authorities, this report has been structured as follows:

- Description of the Plan/Project;
- Identification of European Sites, and the associated Conservation Objectives, which may be potentially affected;
- Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result from the Plan/Project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above; and
- Exclusion of site where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

2.4 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This report has been completed by Ryan Hanley Graduate Ecologist, Breda Quinn B.Sc. and reviewed by Trevor Stafford, a Senior Ecologist at Ryan Hanley. Trevor holds a B.Sc. in Environmental Management and has over 17 years of ecological reporting experience. Breda has four years' field experience and is also adequately experienced in Screenings for AA, having reported on a wide range of development projects.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

There is an existing path which is c.8.9km long, from Harty's Quay to Passage West, which runs through Cork City into Cork County. The c.7km pathway along the abandoned Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway line within the Cork City boundary is in the process of being upgraded to become part of the Lee to Sea Greenway. The existing 2km long path in the Cork County boundary is 2-2.5m wide and runs between the Cork City/Cork County boundary and Mariner's Quay.

3.2 PROPOSED DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The scope along this route would include upgrading an existing 2km long and 2-2.5m wide Pedestrian and Cycle Route to be an approximate 4m wide pedestrian and cycle path. The upgrade of this existing route would include but not be limited to:

- Widening works along the existing path;
- Upgrade existing steps between path and the shore of Lough Mahon;
- Construction of on street parking and new stone wall to segregate vehicles from the proposed pedestrian and cycle path;
- Provision of new benches and tables;
- Provision of new landscaping and trees along the new path;
- Provision of Signage including map boards, tourist information, road signage, decals;
- Amendments to public lighting (where required);
- Construction of cycle parking facilities, including cycle stands;
- New utilities or alternative routing of existing utilities; and
- Ancillary works.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The proposed works are located in an urban environment along an existing path in Passage West, County Cork (See **Figure 3.1**). Fossitt habitat codes are used to classify the habitats in the receiving environment, this information has been taken from the "A Guide to Habitats in Ireland" (Fossitt, 2000). The habitat surrounding the proposed upgrade works consists predominantly of footpaths and artificial surfaces (BL3), (mixed) broadleaved woodland (WD1), amenity grassland (GA2), grassy verges (GS2), improved agricultural grassland (GA1), treelines (WL2), sea walls, piers, and jetties (CC1), infralittoral muds (SS3), shingle and gavel shores (LS1), sea inlets and bays (MW2) and estuaries (MW4) (See **Figure 3.3**).

The closest watercourse to the proposed works is Lough Mahon, a transitional waterbody, located adjacent to the proposed upgrade works (See **Figure 3.2**). There are four bridge crossings along this route, all of which are within scope of the proposed upgrade works.

The works traverse three 1km grid squares of the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) database: W7569, W7668 and W7669. Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*) and Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) bird species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive were recorded in the 1km grid square W7569. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), also a bird species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive was recorded in the 1km grid square W7669. There were no records for species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive in any of the 1km grid squares reviewed. The Invasive Alien Plant Species (IAPS), Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) and Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) has been recorded in the 1km grid square W7569. IAPS

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) has been recorded in the 1km grid square W7668. IAPS Japanese Knotweed and Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*) has been recorded in the 1km grid square W7669. A habitat survey was conducted on the 09/08/2022, by a Ryan Hanley Ecologist. See **Figure 3.3**, which depicts the results from the habitat walkover survey.



FIGURE 3.1 - AERIAL MAP OF RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT



FIGURE 3.2 - MAP OF RECEIVING WATERCOURSES

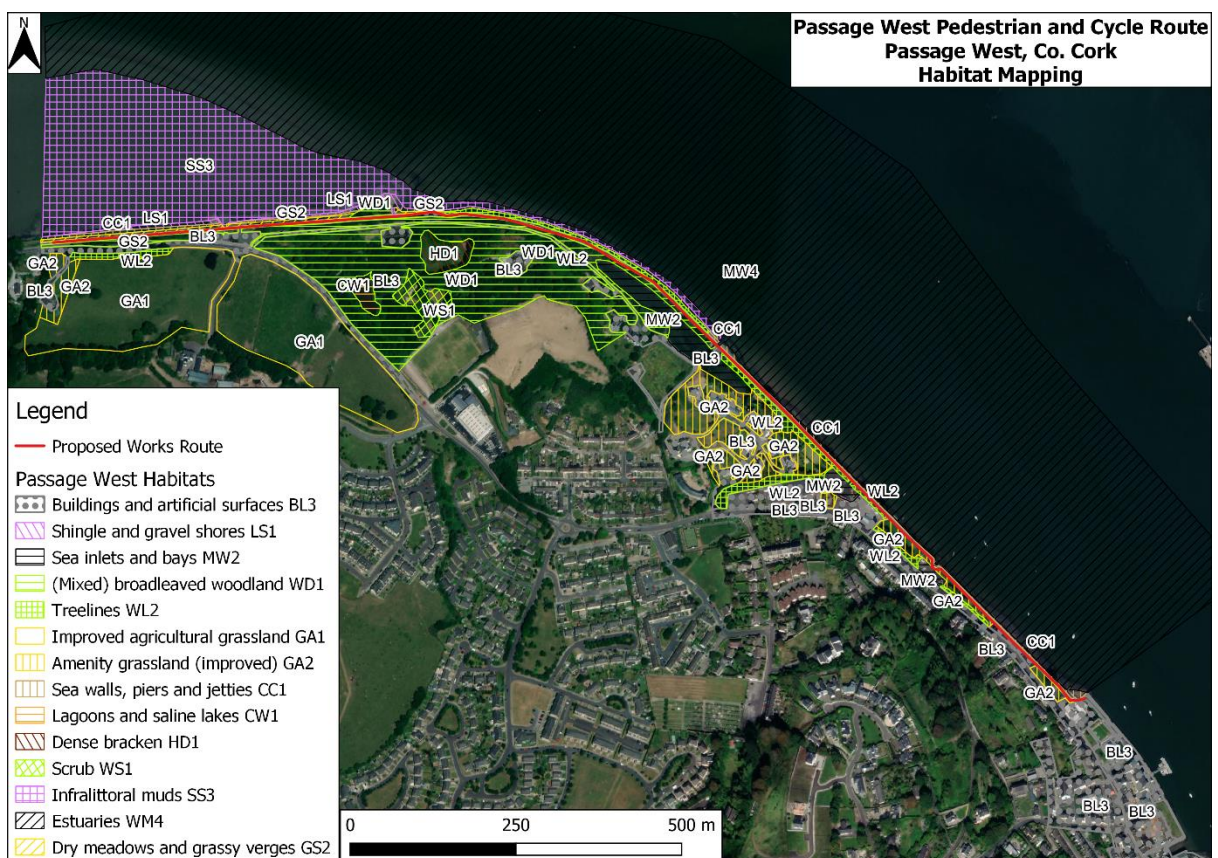


FIGURE 3.3 – HABITAT MAPPING OF PROPOSED WORKS ROUTE

4 EUROPEAN SITES

4.1 DESIGNATED SITES IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT

Section 3.2.3 of the Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010) states that the approach to screening can be different for different plans and projects and will depend on the scale and the likely effects of the project. A key variable that will determine whether or not a particular European Site is likely to be negatively affected is its physical distance from the project site and whether there are any pathways for effect linking the project to these sites.

Generally, UK guidance (Scott Wilson *et al.*, 2006) states that a distance of 15km is currently recommended as the likely Zone of Influence (Zoi) in the case of plans on European Sites and is sufficient to cover the geographic extent over which significant ecological effects are likely to occur. For projects, the guidance recognises that the likely Zoi could be much less than 15km and, in some cases, less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project and the sensitivity of the ecological receptors and the potential for in combination effects. **Figure 4.1** displays the European sites within a 15km radius of the proposed works.

Using the Source » Pathway » Receptor approach (OPR, 2021) and having regard for the location and the nature and relatively small size and scale of the proposed works; it is considered for the purpose of this screening exercise that the likely Zoi on designated sites is the zone immediately around the construction site and any sites with a hydrological connection downstream of the works, where distance would be dependent on the qualifying interests of the site. **Table 4.1** below details European sites with potential Source » Pathway » Receptor links to the proposed works and whether a potential interaction has been identified.

Table 4.1: European sites within 15km of the proposed development and potential for interaction with the proposed works.

Site Name	Site Code	Qualifying Interest Habitats and Species (* = Priority Habitat)	Connectivity to Proposed Works	Potential Interaction
Special Area of Conservation (SAC's)				
Great Island Channel SAC	001508	Conservative Objective Series (06/06/2014) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]; and ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]. 	Hydrological connectivity c.900m NE via Lough Mahon / River Lee.	Yes, Potential Interaction due to Source » Pathway » Receptor connectivity.
Special Protected Area's (SPA's)				
Cork Harbour SPA	004030	Conservative Objective Series (16/12/2014) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]; ▪ Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]; ▪ Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]; ▪ Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028]; ▪ Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]; ▪ Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]; ▪ Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]; 	Directly adjacent.	Yes, Potential Interaction due to Source » Pathway » Receptor connectivity.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]; ▪ Shoveler (<i>Anase clypeata</i>) [A056]; ▪ Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069]; ▪ Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]; ▪ Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]; ▪ Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]; ▪ Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]; ▪ Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]; ▪ Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]; ▪ Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]; ▪ Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]; ▪ Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]; ▪ Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]; ▪ Common Gull (<i>Laruscanus</i>) [A182]; ▪ Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]; ▪ Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]; and ▪ Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]. 		
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As evident in **Table 4.1** there is potential for interaction to occur between the proposed works and Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA due to the Source » Pathway » Receptor connectivity from a hydrological aspect and also the lack of significant distance between the proposed works and the European Sites. As such, both European sites are considered for further assessment with regards to their Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests and the remaining European sites are screened out and not considered further in this report due to the significant distance at which they are located from the proposed works.

Great Island Channel SAC

The proposed works are located c.900m NE of the Great Island Channel SAC and hydrologically connected through the Lough Mahon waterbody. The Great Island Channel stretches from Little Island to Midleton, with its southern boundary being formed by Great Island. It is an integral part of Cork Harbour which contains several other sites of conservation interest. Geologically, Cork Harbour consists of two large areas of open water in a limestone basin, separated from each other and the open sea by ridges of Old Red Sandstone. Within this system, Great Island Channel forms the eastern stretch of the river basin and compared to the rest of Cork Harbour, is relatively undisturbed. Within the site is the estuary of the Owennacurra and Dungourney Rivers. These rivers, which flow through Midleton, provide the main source of freshwater to the North Channel.

The Qualifying Interests and their associated Nature 2000 codes for the Lower River Shannon SAC are listed below (* indicates priority habitat):

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]; and

- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330].

The Conservation Objective of the Great Island Channel SAC is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of Qualifying Interests, for which the Great Island Channel SAC is designated.

Due to the Source » Pathway » Receptor connectivity from the Lough Mahon waterbody, the potential for interaction to arise on the Qualifying Interests for this site is considered further in Section 5 below.

Cork Harbour SPA

The proposed works are located directly adjacent to the Cork Harbour SPA, lining the boundary of the European Site for c.700m. Cork Harbour is a large, sheltered bay system, with several river estuaries - principally those of the Rivers Lee, Douglas, Owenboy and Owennacurra. The SPA site comprises most of the main intertidal areas of Cork Harbour, including all of the North Channel, the Douglas River Estuary, inner Lough Mahon, Monkstown Creek, Lough Beg, the Owenboy River Estuary, Whitegate Bay, Ringabella Creek and the Rostellan and Poul nabibe inlets.

The Qualifying Interests and their associated Nature 2000 codes for the Lower River Shannon SAC are listed below (* indicates priority habitat):

- Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004];
- Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005];
- Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017];
- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) [A028];
- Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048];
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050];
- Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052];
- Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054];
- Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056];
- Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) [A069];
- Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130];
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140];
- Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141];
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142];
- Dunlin Calidris (*alpina alpina*) [A149];
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156];
- Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157];
- Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160];
- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162];
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179];
- Common Gull (*Larus canus*) [A182];
- Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183];
- Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193]; and
- Wetlands [A999].

The Conservation Objective of the Cork Harbour SPA is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of Qualifying Interests, for which the Cork Harbour SPA is designated.

Due to the Source » Pathway » Receptor connectivity from the Lough Mahon waterbody and the closeness of the proposed works to this European Site, the potential for interaction to arise on the Qualifying Interests for this site is considered further in Section 5 below.

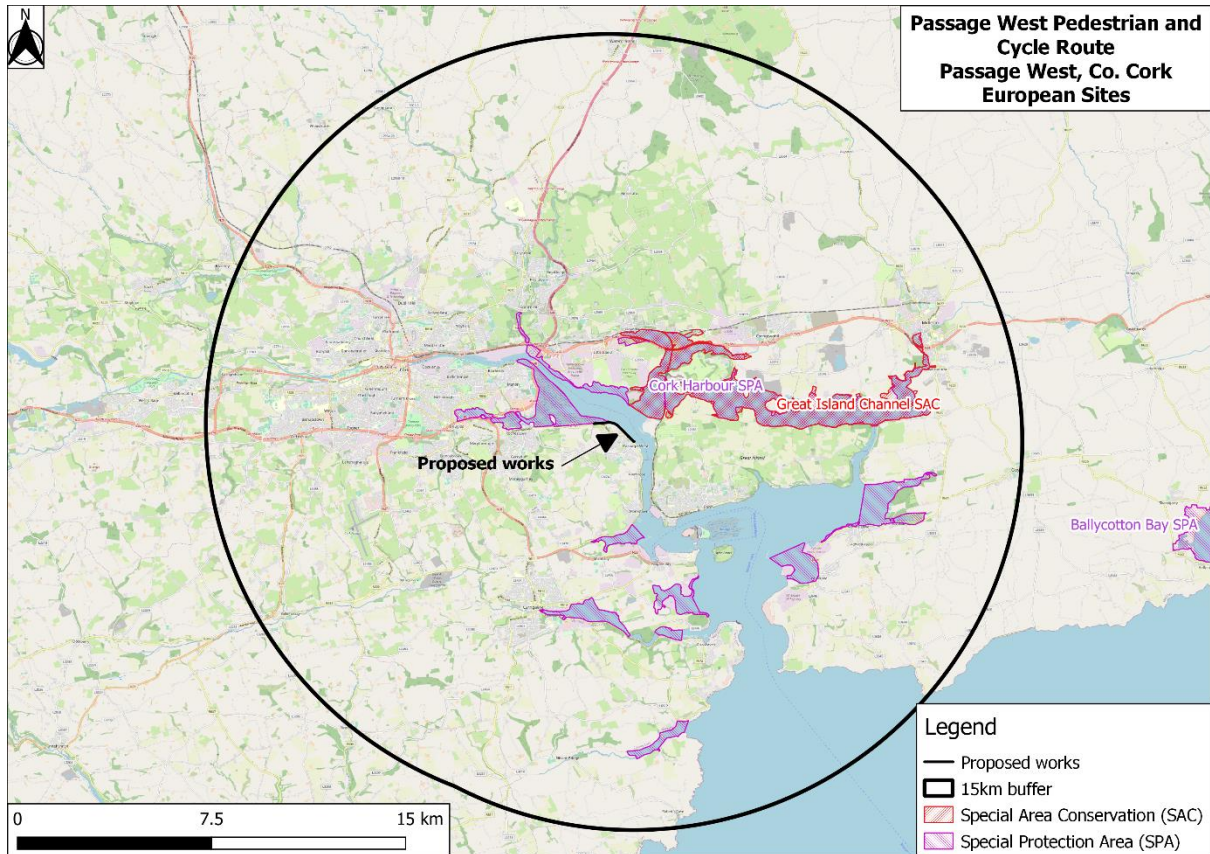


Figure 4.1 - Map of European Sites within 15km buffer

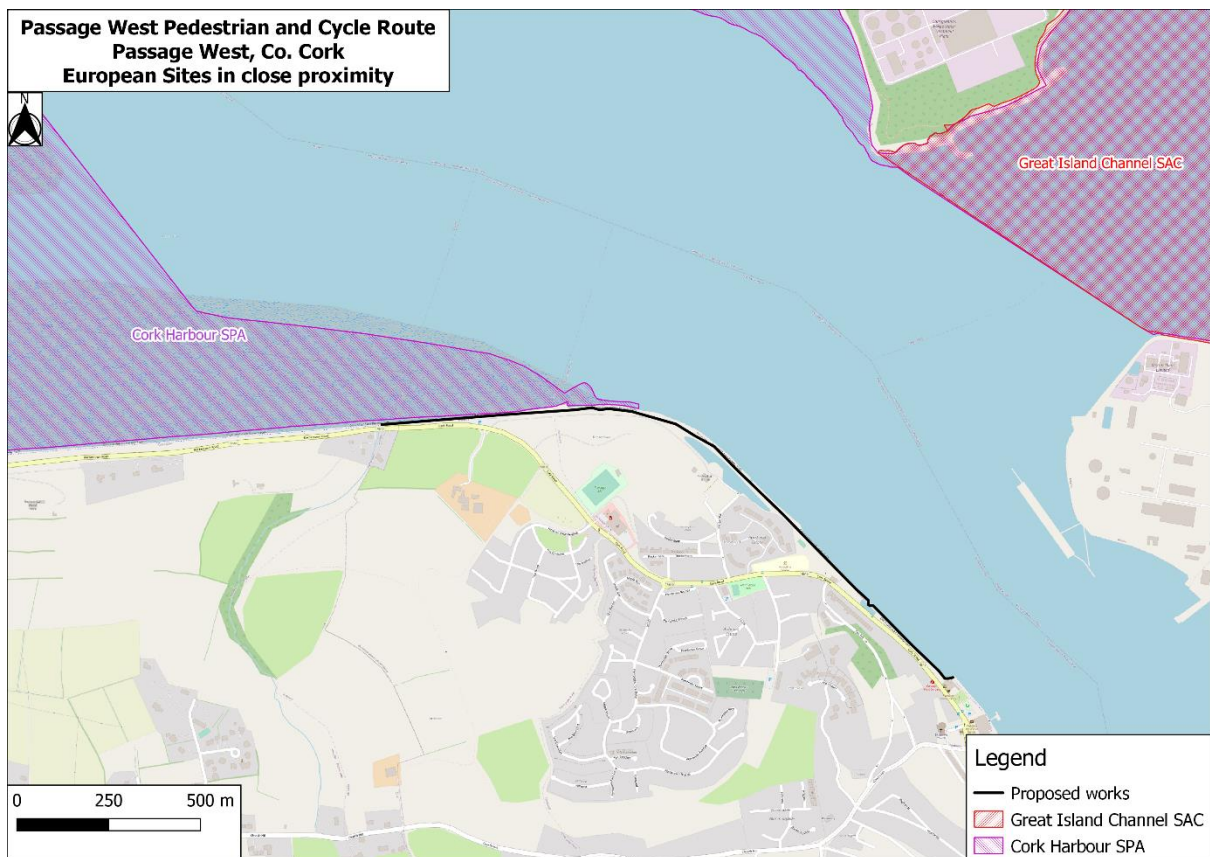


Figure 4.2 - Map of European Sites in close proximity to proposed works

5 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON EUROPEAN SITES

In order to determine whether the project is likely to have a significant impact, the project and its potential impacts are assessed and followed by a determination if the effect identified could be significant in view of the sites conservation objectives.

If the effects of a proposal are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated then the process must proceed to a full Appropriate Assessment and the provision of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

A desk review has been carried out to determine if potential Source » Pathway » Receptor chains exist from the works area and surrounding European sites.

An evaluation of the potential of the proposed works to give rise to significant effects on the Qualifying Interests for the Great Island Channel SAC are detailed in **Table 5.1** and for the Cork Harbour SPA are detailed in **Table 5.2**.

NPWS Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) data for Annex I habitats and species present in the Great Island Channel SAC and the River Shannon and Cork Harbour SPA were assessed on QGIS.

TABLE 5.1 SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF QUALIFYING INTERESTS OF THE GREAT ISLAND CHANNEL SAC.

Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objective	Potential Impact	Screening
<p>1140 Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats</p> <p>Maintain the favourable conservation condition.</p>	<p>NPWS SSCO data illustrates that Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats are found throughout the Great Island Channel SAC, the closest of which is located c925m NE from the proposed works. Benthic community structure is an integral element of the function, structure, and range of this habitat type. The mudflats and sandflats of Great Island Channel SAC have been classified as 'Mixed sediment to sandy mud with polychaetes and oligochaetes community complex'. Any potential runoff generated from the works will be minor and is not considered significant in view of this QI.</p> <p>Due to the significant distance between this QI and the proposed works and the barrier of the tidal watercourse (Lough Mahon), there is no potential for interaction to occur.</p>	<p>Screened out</p>
<p>1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</p> <p>Restore the favourable conservation condition</p>	<p>NPWS SSCO data illustrates that Atlantic salt meadows are also found throughout the Great Island Channel SAC, the closest of which is located c1.9km NE from the proposed works. Any potential runoff generated from the works will be minor and is not considered significant in view of this QI.</p> <p>Due to the significant distance between this QI and the proposed works and the barrier of the tidal watercourse (Lough Mahon), there is no potential for interaction to occur.</p>	<p>Screened out</p>

TABLE 5.2 SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF QUALIFYING INTERESTS OF THE CORK HARBOUR SPA.

Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objective	Potential Impact	Screening
<p>A004 Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)</p> <p>A005 Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)</p> <p>A017 Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)</p> <p>A028 Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)</p> <p>A048 Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</p> <p>A050 Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)</p> <p>A052 Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)</p>	<p>NPWS SSCO data illustrates that Cork Harbour SPA is designated for a plethora of wintering birds and some breeding birds. These Species of Conservation Interest (SCI) listed use the wetland habitat and the waters, which are directly adjacent to the proposed works for c.700m, for foraging. Therefore, the potential for disturbance and water quality effects apply to all SCI's listed.</p> <p>In the case of this project, the habitat is located directly adjacent from the site boundary of this European Site. There is potential for indirect water quality effects to the receiving waterbody (Lough Mahon) arising from the construction stage of the proposed works and the potential for disturbance of the SCI's, thus, there is a possibility for negative ecological effects to occur. Disturbance is also likely at operational stage, due to the increased usage of the</p>	<p>Screened in</p>

Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objective	Potential Impact	Screening
<p>A054 Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) A056 Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) A069 Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) A130 Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) A142 Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>) A156 Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) A179 Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) A182 Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) A193 Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) A999 Wetlands</p> <p>Maintain the favourable conservation condition.</p>	<p>pedestrian and cycle path. It is considered that the SCI's are within the zone of influence of the project and thus, there is potential for interaction / significant impacts to these species.</p> <p>During 2010/2011 a waterbird survey programme was conducted by the NPWS within Cork Harbour. This waterbird survey programme was designed to investigate how waterbirds are distributed across coastal wetland sites during the low tide period. The surveys ran alongside and were complementary to the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS). This survey consisted of four low tide counts (October, November and December 2010 and February 2011) and one high tide count (January 2011), where waterbirds were counted within a series of 73 count subsites within the SPA. Subsites OL537 and OL510 include the area in which the proposed works are located. Birds recorded within these subsites include the Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Red-breasted merganser, Great-crested grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Black-tailed godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Black-headed gull, Common gull, and Lesser black-backed gull. The species which had the highest population numbers within these subsites included the Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Black-tailed godwit, Curlew, Redshank, and the Black-headed gull.</p> <p>The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) is coordinated by BirdWatch Ireland and funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Each winter over 400 skilled volunteers, NPWS Rangers and BirdWatch Ireland staff monitor wintering waterbird populations at their wetland sites across the Republic of Ireland. These surveys focused on roosting sites as they were carried out using the high tide survey methodology. There is one subsite (OL452) which covers most, but not all, of the proposed work's route. The species with the higher mean counts from the years 2016/17 – 2020/21 include the Wigeon, Teal, Red-breasted merganser, Great-crested grebe, Oystercatcher, Turnstone, Redshank, Black-headed gull, and Cormorant.</p>	

6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS WITH OTHER PLANS/PROJECTS

In order to fully assess the potential impact of the proposed development on European Sites, the project must be assessed alone or in combination with existing activities and proposed plans for the region. Myplan.ie and Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 were consulted in order to determine if there were any other plans or projects in the area which could result in cumulative impacts.

The Draft Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 strategy has been adopted by Elected Members of Cork County Council at the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 25th April 2022 and it came into effect on Monday 6th June 2022. The plan sets out the overall planning and sustainable development strategy for the county which must be consistent with the National Planning Framework 2018 and the Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) 2020. Appropriate Assessment Reports were carried out in conjunction to the Development Plan to determine the effects of the plan and its policies/objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects on the Natura 2000 network. As a result, environmental considerations have been fully integrated into the Plans through the Appropriate Assessment process, therefore, the Cork County Development Plan in combination with the proposed works will need to be considered in-combination with the work order as to potential effect on European Sites.

The proposed upgrade works to the path is a small part of the Transport and Mobility chapters within the Cork City Development Plan and Cork County Development Plan, shared by Cork County Council and Cork City Council. Cork City Council have and continues to upgrade and create greenways such as Lee to Sea Greenway and Passage Railway Greenway (which links in with this project). These projects are all included in the Cork Metropolitan Cycle Network Plan (2015) and the City Centre Movement Strategy (CCMS, 2013). Cork County Council also plans to create and upgrade more sustainable transportation options, including this project. Existing greenways in the county include Cork Harbour Greenway and Carrigaline to Crosshaven. A feasibility study has been prepared on developing a greenway from Passage West to Carrigaline. If successful, it would link the existing greenways and 25km of linked greenway from the city to Crosshaven. Midleton to Youghal Greenway and Mallow to Dungarvan Greenway are two of the largest greenway projects Cork County Council have and continue to work on. As both Cork City and County Councils have prioritised sustainable travel, including greenways, tourism and increased footfall are a large pressure to the surrounding environment. This project, in combination with all other greenway projects that are planned surrounding Lough Mahon and the Cork Harbour SPA, will create an increased footfall and disturbance pressure to the designated species within the SPA in Lough Mahon.

Local planning applications were also reviewed utilising myplan.ie. The review of the Cork County Council planning register documented relevant general development planning applications in the vicinity of the proposed works. The largest application is located c.472m east of the proposed works and consists of the construction of a new agricultural fertiliser facility for use by Goulding Chemicals Limited; and additional port operational use of the jetty to facilitate cargo vessels, on an existing site. This planning application project is located on Great Island, which is separated to the proposed works by the Lough Mahon waterbody. Planning permission was granted on the 10/02/2022. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been completed for this project and concluded that provided the recommended mitigation measures are implemented in full it is not expected that the development of a new Goulding Chemical Limited facility and additional port operational uses to facilitate passenger and cargo vessels at Marino Point will result in an adverse residual impact on the integrity of Natura 200 sites considered within the NIS. If this were to take place at the same time as the proposed works, it is deemed that there may be a potential for interaction to arise.

Other cumulative pressures may include the Carrigrennan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP), which discharges treated wastewater from the plant to Lough Mahon. Works were completed in May 2021, to upgrade the plant to ensure appropriate phosphorus removal and that all water discharges from the WwTP meet the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Treatment (Amendment) Regulations 2004 (SI 440/2004), due to Lough Mahon being designated as a sensitive area.

7 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Potential significant effects during the proposed works as part of the Passage West Pedestrian and Cycle Route Project have been considered in the context of the Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA, and their Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives as can be seen in **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2**.

The potential for a significant effect on the Great Island Channel SAC has been screened out.

It is determined that there is potential for a significant effect on the Cork Harbour SPA in view of the sites' conservation objectives whether alone or in combination with other plans and / or projects. This assessment is based on consideration of:

1. Relevant qualifying interests, their sensitivities and Conservation Objectives;
2. Potential source pathways between European Sites identified and the proposed development;
3. The temporary and localised (scale) nature of the proposed development.

The Screening report evaluates the objective information presented in the Project Description, taking consideration of the proposed works elements; however, the evaluation does not presuppose that the construction requirements specified in the design, or to be implemented on site by the Contractor, are integral to avoid or reduce harmful effects on any European Site. Therefore, it is considered that in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the proposed Passage West Pedestrian and Cycle Route Project works in County Cork has potential to cause a significant effect on the Natura 2000 network and that Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process (Natura Impact Statement) **is required**.