

MWP

**Appropriate Assessment Screening
Report**
Replacement of Clairín pedestrian rail bridge

Tipperary County Council

September 2022

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1. Summary of Findings

1.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report

Project Title	Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report - Replacement of Clairín pedestrian rail bridge
Project Proponent	Tipperary County Council
Project Location	Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary
Screening for Appropriate Assessment	The Screening for Appropriate Assessment is undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of the proposed project, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of the site on a Natura 2000 Site.
Conclusion	It has been objectively concluded during the screening process that the Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the proposed project will not be significantly impacted by the proposed project at Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary. These sites are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower River Suir SAC – 0.4km• Comeragh Mountains SAC - 11.8km• Hugginstown Fen SAC – 15.4km

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of Assessment

A Part 8 Planning Application is being lodged by Tipperary County Council (TCC) for the replacement of Clairín pedestrian rail bridge.

This screening for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on any European site (i.e. Natura 2000 Sites), in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

This screening for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken by a staff environmental scientist from Malachy Walsh and Partners, Engineering and Environmental consultants.

2.2 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)¹ seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protected Areas (SPAs). It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which form part of Natura 2000, a network of protected sites throughout the European Community. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law and the relevant Regulations are the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. The requirement for appropriate Assessment of the implications of plans and projects on the Natura 2000 network of sites comes from the Habitats Directive (Article 6(3)). Further information is available at:

¹ This is the codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended (see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/>

<http://www.npws.ie/planning/appropriateassessment/>

The current assessment was conducted within this legislative framework and also the DoEHLG (2009) guidelines. As outlined in these, it is the responsibility of the proponent of the project, in this case Tipperary County Council, to provide a comprehensive and objective screening for Appropriate Assessment, which can then be used by the competent authority, in order to conduct the Appropriate Assessment (DoEHLG, 2009).

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (amended) (Section 177U), a Local Authority is required to carry out a Screening for appropriate assessment of a proposed development prior to issuing consent to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge (and the sites conservation objectives), if that project or plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. This information presented in this Screening for appropriate assessment will be used by the competent authority (in this case Tipperary County Council) to assist them to complete their screening exercise.

2.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The Appropriate Assessment process is a four-stage process with issues and tests at each stage. The purpose of the screening assessment is to record in a transparent and reasoned manner the likely effects on Natura 2000 sites of a proposed development. 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 stages are set out in **Appendix 1**.

3. Assessment Methodology

3.1 Appropriate Assessment Guidance

This screening for Appropriate Assessment, or Stage 1, has been undertaken in accordance with the European Commission Methodological Guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001), the European Commission Guidance 'Managing Natura 2000 Sites' Brussels, 21.11.2018 C (2018) 7621 final (EC, 2000), and Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects - Guidance for Planning Authorities prepared by the NPWS (DoEHLG, 2009 (rev. 2010) and the Planning Regulator: - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management , OPR Practice Note PN01 Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021.

3.2 Desk Study

In order to complete the screening for Appropriate Assessment certain information on the existing environment is required. A desk study was carried out to collate available information on the subject site's natural environment. This comprised a review of the following publications, data and datasets:

- OSI Aerial photography and 1:50000 mapping
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) (on-line map-viewer)
- BirdWatch Ireland
- Teagasc soil area maps (NBDC website)
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) area maps

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) water quality data
- South Eastern River Basin District (SWRBD) datasets (Water Framework Directive)
- Other information sources and reports footnoted in the course of the report

4. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

As set out in the NPWS guidance (DoEHLG, 2009), the task of establishing whether a plan or project is likely to have an effect on a Natura 2000 Site is based on a preliminary impact assessment using available information and data, including that outlined above, and other available environmental information, supplemented as necessary by local site information and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could be significant. The precautionary principle approach is required.

Once the potential impacts that may arise from the proposal are identified the significance of these is assessed through the use of key indicators:

- Habitat loss
- Habitat alteration
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Water quality and resource.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) determines the need for a full Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2) and consists of a number of steps, each of which is addressed in the following sections of this report:

- 4.1 Establish whether the proposed project works are necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 Site
- 4.2 Description of the proposed project works
- 4.3 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites potentially affected
- 4.4 Identification and description of potential individual and cumulative impacts of the works
- 4.5 Assessment of the significance of the impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 Sites
- 4.6 Conclusion of screening stage

The purpose of the screening assessment is to record in a transparent and reasoned manner the likely effects, on relevant Natura 2000 Sites, of the proposed project works.

4.1 Management of Natura 2000 Sites

The proposal is not connected with or necessary to the conservation management of a Natura 2000 site.

4.2 Description of Plan/Project

The nature and extent of the proposed development consists of the replacement of existing pedestrian rail bridge. The replacement bridge will be a precast concrete portal frame with an n-shaped upper unit and 2 No L-shaped abutments/footings per ring. There will be two rings in this bridge, giving an overall width of 3.5m and a width

between the inside face of the parapets of 3m. The L-shaped footings will have an *insitu* reinforced concrete stitch added on site to form the foundation heels of the abutments. The overall span, between the faces of the abutments, will be 10.6m. The height of the abutments will be approximately 6m, above top of base. The abutments will be 0.4m thick. The deck will be 0.4m thick at the abutments and 0.55m thick at mid span. There will be an *insitu* concrete stitch along the junction between the two precast concrete rings.

New 3m wide approach ramps will be constructed and will be in reinforced concrete to provide for both pedestrians and cyclists. The northern approach ramp will be on an earthen embankment and will not require parapet railings. The southern approach ramp will be provided with 1.25m high parapets, with grab rails at 0.9m high.

The project will require the use of concrete, tarmac, resin bound path, reinforcing steel, steel parapets and Class 6F1 stone material. The project is considered small in scale and volumes used will not be significant.

The bridge will be closed for a minimum period of twelve weeks and at least three weekend rail line closures will be required. It is likely that a 200t crane will be required to lift out the old bridge and lift in the new bridge. This, in turn, will require a hardstanding area within the green area to the north of the bridge.

4.3 Site Location and Description

The proposed development site is located in the northwest of Carrick-on-Suir, 1.4km west of Carrick-on-Suir train station (Figure 4-1 & Figure 4-2). The pedestrian bridge crosses the Waterford to Limerick railway line at 62 miles, 470 yards.



Figure 4-1: Site Location



Figure 4-2: Site Location (Aerial)

A view of the existing pedestrian rail bridge is outlined on **Plate 4-1** and **Plate 4-2**. The embankments comprise primarily grassy verges (GS2) and embankments on top of which intermittent trees including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) are present with bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*) present throughout. No ecologically significant roosting habitat for bats was identified within the bridge structure. No ecologically valuable habitat was identified within the proposed works area.



Plate 4-1: View of existing pedestrian bridge with embankments



Plate 4-2: View of underneath pedestrian bridge with embankment.

The bridge links St John's Terrace to the north of the track with Clareen Close and the N24 to the south. There is also a Lidl store off Clareen Close. The loss of the bridge would result in a 1.8km diversion via the R696 and the N24 for residents of St John's Terrace wishing to access Clareen Close.

Carrick-on-Suir is located within the Electoral Division of 'Carrick-on-Suir'. CSO data indicates that, in 2016, this ED had a total population of 5,771 person's residing in the town. The dominant land-use surrounding the town is agricultural.

The Corine Landcover Category (2018) at the subject site is classed as, 'Discontinuous Urban Fabric' (112) and in the surrounding area the dominant land use is 'Agricultural Areas' (231).

The subject site is located in the townland of 'Townparks'. The surrounding townlands in the region are 'Ballylynch', 'Ballynagrana', 'Ballyrichard', 'Deerpark Lodge' and 'Knocknaconnery'.

The town of Carrick-on-Suir is underlain by limestones. Soils generally comprise of made ground and works will be carried out in an existing urban area. According to Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) there are two types of limestone bedrock in the area. 'Tournaisian limestone' which is described as 'Palaeozoic, Carboniferous, Mississippian' and 'Dinantian Pure Bedded Limestones' described as 'Calcareous'.

The subject site is located within the 'Suir' (Catchment ID_16) and the 'Suir_16_01' sub-catchments which all fall within the Hydrometric Area 16. As part of the national characterisation programme undertaken for the second lifecycle of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) river basin management planning, assessments of individual sub-catchments have been undertaken. This assessment has been led by the EPA with input from Local Authorities and other public bodies. It has been noted in this report it states the main pressures are 'anthropogenic pressures' and 'Urban/domestic wastewater'. The town of Carrick-on-Suir is the tidal limit of the Suir river.

Aside from the Suir river itself, there are several other river water bodies, the nearest of which is the Glenbrook river (EPA_Code 16G04), a 3rd order waterbody to the east of the proposed project which flows in a southerly direction through the town into the Suir. The Lingaun river (EPA_Code 16L01), a 4th order river is located approximately 2km to the east and flows in a south-easterly direction in to the Suir river. There are several other 1st and 2nd order streams located to the south of the Suir.

There are several EPA surface-water quality monitoring stations in the vicinity of the town centre, two of which are situated on the Glen river and two of which are located on the Suir river. This assessment of water quality is based on the macro-invertebrate community and physio-chemical characteristics of the waterbody at these locations. The WFD status of the River Suir for the 2013-2018 period was Poor, based on Biological Status (Poor) and Dissolved Oxygen Saturation (Fail).



Figure 4-3: Aerial view of Existing Bridge

4.4 Purpose of the Project

The purpose, of undertaking the proposed project is to replace an existing sub-standard pedestrian overbridge with a compliant structure that will allow pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross over the railway line.

4.5 Characteristics of the Project

The proposal is described below and has been confirmed with the project engineer.

<p><i>Size, scale, area, land-take</i></p>	<p>The area of the project development area is approximately 500m² ha.</p> <p>Small scale project, the existing bridge is to be removed and a replacement bridge provided. The new bridge consists of a deck width of 3m to provide for both pedestrians and cyclists. The southern approach ramp to be upgraded to satisfy present day standards. The replacement bridge be a single span of 10.6m, with 2m of approach retaining walls on the south side and 7m on the north side. Subject to the results of a geotechnical investigation, it is anticipated that the foundations for the bridge and approach walls will be ground bearing. The southern approach ramp will be approximately 40m long with retaining walls on either side to avoid side slopes encroaching on adjacent properties.</p> <p>The size, scale and design of the proposed development is not considered significant.</p>
<p><i>Details of physical changes that will take place during the various stages of implementing the proposal</i></p>	<p>The original bridge is to be demolished and replaced by the proposed bridge. Demolition will involve the removal of the existing bridge surface, steel work and some concrete. The demolition phase is expected to last for one weekend.</p> <p>The pedestrian bridge will be constructed where there existing bridge is currently located and a small area will need to be cleared to create the hard standing area required for the crane.</p>
<p><i>Description of resource requirements for the construction/operation and decommissioning of the proposal (water resources, construction material, human presence etc)</i></p>	<p>The proposed works will be within an urban environment, which has been significantly modified by human activity.</p> <p>There will be no requirement for water abstraction for the proposed development as water requirements will be met by the public water supply.</p> <p>Construction activity will include shallow and localised excavations to maximum depth of 200mm bgl. Excavated materials will be stored in the construction compound area and reused on site. It is not anticipated that in-situ rock breaking will be required.</p> <p>The replacement bridge will be a precast concrete portal frame with an n-shaped upper unit and 2 No L-shaped abutments/footings per ring. There will be two rings in this bridge, giving an overall width of 3.5m and a width between the inside face of the parapets of 3m. The L-shaped footings will have an insitu reinforced concrete stitch added on site to form the foundation heels of the abutments. The overall span, between the faces of the abutments, will be 10.6m. The height of the abutments will be approximately 6m, above top of base. The abutments will be 0.4m thick. The deck will be 0.4m thick at the abutments and 0.55m thick at mid span. There will be an insitu concrete stitch along the junction between the two precast concrete rings.</p> <p>The project will require the use of concrete, tarmac, resin bound path, reinforcing steel, steel parapets and Class 6F1 stone material. The project is considered small in scale and volumes used will not be significant.</p>

<p><i>Description of timescale for the various activities that will take place as a result of implementation (including likely start and finish date)</i></p>	<p>Construction works will take approximately 12 weeks from commencement. The bridge will be closed for a minimum period of six weeks. The railway station will be closed for three weekends during the construction period. Works are expected to commence in Q3 of 2023.</p>
<p><i>Description of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) and their disposal</i></p>	<p>Given the scale and type of development, it is unlikely that there will be significant volumes of waste generated during the construction phase. Demolition waste will comprise steel, which will be recycled, and minor amounts (2m³) of concrete and some mineral felt which will be segregated for removal off-site to an appropriately authorised recovery or disposal facility. Debris and waste created at the construction site compounds will be disposed of at an authorised waste facility. In addition, any excess construction materials will be returned to the supplier.</p>
<p><i>Identification of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) that may be of particular concern in the context of the Natura 2000 network</i></p>	<p>There will be no hazardous waste generated by the proposed works.</p>
<p><i>Description of any additional services required to implement the project or plan, their location and means of construction</i></p>	<p>There are no additional services required for the proposed works.</p>

4.6 Identification of Other Projects or Plans or Activities

A desktop search of proposed and existing planning applications was undertaken on the 30th August 2022. The search flagged planning applications within a period dating back to 2017 (last 5 years); any refused, invalid or withdrawn applications were omitted.

The most recent (<5 years) grants of planning for the townlands adjacent to the proposed extension include small scale developments:

Application Number: 22430 (2022) - a single storey extension to the rear and side comprising a bedroom/shower room and alterations to the residence and all associated site works.

Application Number: 211819 (2021) - alterations to the previously granted solar farm (Tipperary County Council Reg Ref 17600928) Permission was originally granted for a solar photovoltaic installation comprising arrays of approximately 13,770 solar PV panels on ground mounted frames no taller than 2.8m; 2 no. inverter/transformer container units; a battery storage container unit; a 20kV on-site substation; landscaping, fencing and CCTV cameras around the solar PV arrays and connecting to the off-site Deerpark ESB substation; provision of a temporary construction compound; widening of the existing farm entrance and internal tracks; and all ancillary works on a site of 9.12 ha. Permission is now sought for the following: optimised solar pv panel configuration to comprise up to 23,581 m² of solar panels on ground mounted frames; increase in height to the permitted solar panels from 2.72m to 2.82m and; Permission for an operational period of the solar farm from 35 years. Planning Permission is sought for a period of 10 year.

Application Number: 19601103 (2019) - construction of 39 no. new dwelling houses consisting of 1 no. detached 4 bedroom dwelling, 16 no. 4 bedroom semi-detached dwellings, 18 no. 3 bedroom semi-detached dwellings and 4 no. 3 bedroom terraced dwellings along with a foul sewer pumping station, etc.

Application Number: 17601041 (2017) - replacing existing sitting room window with a new window and exit door combined located to the front of my residence at ground floor level.

Application Number: 07560045 (2017) - development on lands of c.12.3 acres (4.975 ha), comprising of 94 no. 3, 4 and 5 bed detached and semi-detached two storey houses (with a total floor area of c.10,883 sq.m.), retail/commercial units along the Dublin Road (area c.480 sq.m.) and a childcare facility (area c.220 sq. m.). The proposed development also includes for all associated site development and infrastructural works, surface car parking, landscaping, boundary treatment and open spaces. Access to the development will be via the Dublin Road, adjacent to the existing ESB substation.

A Part 8 Planning Application was submitted in Q3 of 2021 for the Carrick-on-Suir urban regeneration project: this project has been granted permission and construction is expected to commence in Q3 of 2023 at the earliest, on a phased basis. This development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Carrick on Suir's town centre comprising the upgrading of existing streets and lanes with new high quality paving, kerbing, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works (including undergrounding of overhead ESB cables). Footpath space will be widened, traffic calming will be developed through build out, reduced road carriage widths and improved pedestrian crossings. Existing car parks will be improved and new car parking spaces provided. Pedestrian movement will be prioritised by the design. The development also includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement at Sean Healy Park comprising the development of a new vehicular parking area with entry and exit, footpaths and hard paved areas, widening of the Blueway and the development of associated landscaping and services/utilities to serve the proposed and future uses. The extension of the Suir Blueway along North Quays to provide cycleway and pedestrian linkages from Sean Healy Park to Ormond Castle and the town

centre. The upgrading of Strand Walk with new paving and the development of a new access to Ormond Castle grounds and closing of the existing ramped access.

The closest point of the urban regeneration project to Clairin bridge is at the corner of Sean Healy Park, approximately 275m away. It is considered that the proposal to replace the bridge does not have the potential to cause cumulative/in-combination effects with the urban regeneration project.

Apart from the urban regeneration project described above, no medium-large scale developments were found in close proximity to the project development site. Given the nature and scale of the above-described developments, no cumulative effects are predicted as a result of this development.

4.7 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

4.7.1 Zone of Impact Influence

The screening stage of AA involves compiling a ‘long list’ of Natura 2000 sites within a zone of potential impact influence for later analysis which may or may not be significantly impacted upon by the proposal.

The “zone of influence” for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities (CIEEM, 2018). This is likely to extend beyond the site where there are ecological or hydrological connection(s) beyond the site boundaries.

The subject site and a distance of 15km is recommended as a potential zone of influence (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). However, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) guidance (NPWS, 2009) advises that this zone of influence be assessed on a case-by-case basis with consideration of the nature, size, and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors and the potential for cumulative effects. As such, Natura 2000 sites beyond 15km may also be considered based on the potential for an ecological and/or hydrological to the project site, bearing in mind the precautionary principle and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework.

Following this, the potential impacts associated with the proposal will be identified before an assessment is made of the likely significance of these impacts.

As described above, the test for the screening for Appropriate Assessment is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with other plans/project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. If there are any significant, potentially significant, or uncertain effects, it will be necessary to proceed to Appropriate Assessment and submit an NIS.

The locations of Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential significant impact influence of the proposal site, bearing in mind the precautionary principle, are shown on a map in **Figure 4-4**. Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential significant impact influence of the proposal site, including their proximity are listed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Natura 2000 Sites within zone of potential impact influence of the proposal site

Designated Site	Site Code	Proximity of Site to Nearest Point of Designated Site	Hydrological/Ecological Connection? (Yes/No)
Lower River Suir SAC	002137	0.4km	No. There is no direct hydrological and ecological connection between the proposed works and this SAC.
Comeragh Mountains SAC	001952	11.8km	No. There is a lack of hydrological and ecological connection between the proposed works and this SAC.
Hugginstown Fen SAC	000404	15.4km	No. There is a lack of hydrological and ecological connection between the proposed works and this SAC.

4.7.2 Characteristics of Natura 2000 Sites

Table 2 lists the qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest for the Natura 2000 sites that lie within the zone of potential impact influence of the subject site. Information pertaining to the Natura 2000 sites is from site synopses, conservation objectives and other information available on www.npws.ie.

Table 2: Natura 2000 sites with qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest.

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest
Lower River Suir SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] • Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] • <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0] • <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] • <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] • <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] • <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] • <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaité Shad) [1103] • <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest
Comeragh Mountains SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] • European dry heaths [4030] • Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] • Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] • Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110] • Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] • Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220] • <i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i> (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]
Hugginstown Fen SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alkaline fens [7230]

4.7.3 Conservation Objectives

According to the Habitats Directive, the *conservation status of a natural habitat* will be taken as ‘favourable’ within its biogeographic range when:

- its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

According to the Habitats Directive, the conservation status of a species means the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as ‘favourable’ within its biogeographic range when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Site-specific conservation objectives are available for the following sites:

- Lower River Suir SAC (002137) (Version 1.0, produced March 2017)
- Hugginstown Fen SAC (000404) (Version 1.0, produced July 2019)

Generic conservation objectives were available for Comeragh Mountains SAC (001952).

These have been accessed on the 2nd September 2022. No management plan is available for this site. All conservation objectives together with other designated site information are available on <http://www.npws.ie/protectedsites/>.

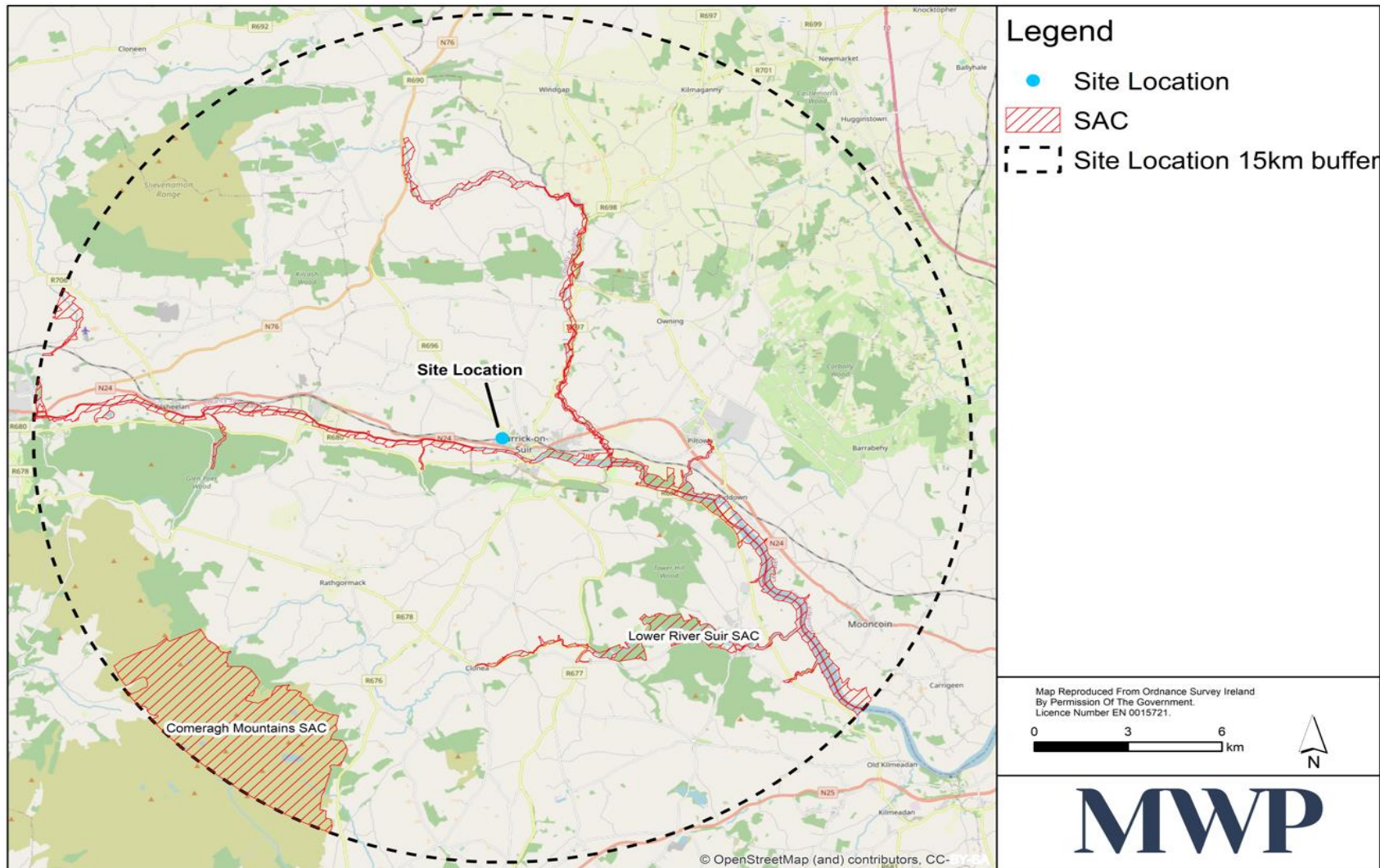


Figure 4-4: Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence

4.8 Identification of Potential Impacts

Potential likely ecological impacts arising from the project are identified in this section.

<p><i>Description of elements of the project likely to give rise to potential ecological impacts.</i></p>	<p>There is potential for ecological impacts to occur during the proposed works from removing existing bridge structure and instalment of proposed bridge.</p>
<p><i>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary ecological impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) by virtue of:</i></p> <p><i>Size and scale;</i></p> <p><i>Land-take;</i></p> <p><i>Distance from Natura 2000 Site or key features of the Site;</i></p> <p><i>Resource requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Emissions;</i></p> <p><i>Excavation requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Transportation requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Duration of construction, operation etc.; and</i></p> <p><i>Other.</i></p>	<p>The land take of the project is 500m².</p> <p>The proposed works will be within an urban environment, which has been significantly modified by human activity. The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 site; as such there will be no land-take from any Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>There are three Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence of the proposed works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower River Suir SAC (002137) – 0.4km • Comeragh Mountains SAC (001952) – 11.8km • Hugginstown Fen SAC (000404) – 15.4km <p>There is no hydrological or ecological connection between the site of the proposed works and Lower River Suir SAC (002137), Comeragh Mountains SAC (001952), and Hugginstown Fen SAC (000404).</p> <p>Water abstraction will not be required as part of the proposed project.</p> <p>There will be no requirement to traverse through any Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>Construction works will be temporary and relatively short-term in nature.</p> <p>The proposed project is anticipated to begin in Q3 2023 and take approximately 12 weeks to complete and at least three weekend rail line closures will be required.</p> <p>There are no other potential sources of impacts associated with the proposed project works.</p>

4.9 Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts

This section considers the list of sites identified in **Table 1**, above, together with the potential ecological impacts identified in the previous section and determines whether the project is likely to have significant effects on a European site. When assessing impact, European sites are only considered relevant where a credible or tangible source-pathway-receptor link exists between the proposed development and a protected species or habitat type. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk initiated by having a 'source' (e.g. excavation), and an impact

pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a waterbody which connects the proposal site to the protected species or habitats). An evaluation based on these factors to determine which European sites are the plausible ecological receptors for potential impacts of the proposed project works will be conducted in **Sections 4.9.1 and 4.9.2**, below. The evaluation takes cognisance of the scope, scale, nature and size of the project, its location relative to the European sites listed in **Table 1** above, and the degree of connectedness that exists between the project and each European site’s potential ecological receptors.

4.9.1 European sites outside the zone of potential impact influence

With regards to the proposed project at Carrick-on-Suir, it is considered that the works do not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the conservation objectives for which certain Natura 2000 sites are designated. It is considered that the Natura 2000 sites listed in **Table 3** are outside the zone of potential impact influence of the proposal due to the absence of plausible impact pathways and/or the attenuating effect of the distance intervening. Therefore, it is objectively concluded that significant impacts on these sites are not reasonably foreseeable as a result of the programme of works described in **Section 4.5**. These sites, which are listed in **Table 3**, below, along with their distance and the rationale for exclusion, will not be considered further in this document. A Finding of No Significant Effects report (FONSE) is presented in **Appendix 2**.

Table 3: European Sites excluded from further assessment

European Site	Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)	Rationale for exclusion from assessment
Comeragh Mountains SAC	11.8km	No source-pathway receptor present. Intervening distance of 11.8km
Hugginstown Fen SAC	15.4km	No source-pathway receptor present. Intervening distance of 15.4km

4.9.2 European sites within the zone of potential impact influence

Of the European sites listed in **Table 1**, above, one is considered to have the potential to be impacted as a result of the proposal. Construction projects generally pose potential threats to Natura 2000 sites through habitat alteration, species disturbance/displacement and/or water quality impacts. Given the proximity of the proposed development works, there is potential for these impacts to occur within this European site. Therefore, the assessment of significance of potential impacts that follows focuses on the following European sites:

Table 4: European sites within the zone of potential impact influence

European Site	Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)	Rationale for inclusion in assessment
Lower River Suir SAC	0.4km	Proximity of site to proposed development works

The likelihood of significant effects to a European site from the project was determined based on several indicators including:

- Water quality and resource
- Habitat loss

- Habitat alteration
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species

The likelihood of significant cumulative/in-combination effects is assessed in **Section 4.9.2.5**.

4.9.2.1 Water Quality

There are some elements of the proposed works which could potentially result in impairment of water quality. In general, where works are conducted within proximity to water bodies, impairment of water quality may potentially occur as a result of run-off of sediment/fines or accidental fuel/oil spills from machinery/equipment. These elements of the proposal could therefore potentially result in pollution of the aquatic environment.

Surface water runoff will be collected in the existing stormwater drainage system. In the operational phases 2 new slot drains will be installed on the bridge to direct rainwater to the existing storm water drainage system incorporating gullies.

The River Suir is located approximately 0.4km south to the proposed project, which forms part of the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137).

There is no direct hydrological connection between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137). No significant impacts to the Lower River Suir SAC from reduced water quality, will occur as a result of the proposal.

4.9.2.2 Habitat Loss and Alteration

The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 sites and there is no direct hydrological connection between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC. As outlined previously in section **4.9.2.1**, above, the proposed works will not result in a significant impact on water quality. No invasive species have been identified on site. Therefore, there will be no significant impacts to the Lower River Suir SAC by virtue of habitat loss and/or alteration.

4.9.2.3 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species

The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 sites and there is no direct hydrological connection between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC.

As outlined in section **4.9.2.1**, the proposed works will not have an impact on water quality. Therefore, it is considered there will be no disturbance and/or displacement of the species for which the Lower River Suir SAC is designated by virtue of habitat loss and/or alteration.

4.9.2.4 Habitat or Species Fragmentation

As outlined in section **4.9.2.1**, the proposed project works will not have an impact on water quality. The works will not result in any barrier to the movement of species upstream or downstream. Therefore, considering this and the absence of a direct source/pathway receptor between the proposed project works and the SAC, there will be no fragmentation of the habitats or species for which the Lower River Suir SAC is designated. Thus, no significant impact will occur on the Lower River Suir SAC by virtue of habitat or species fragmentation.

4.9.2.5 Cumulative/In-combination Impacts

As well as singular effects, the potential for in-combination or cumulative impacts also need to be considered. A cumulative impact arises from incremental changes caused by past, present and proposed projects together with the proposed development considered in this document.

Relevant plans and projects have been identified in **Section 4.6** above. The majority of other projects identified are primarily small, residential developments. No additional plans or projects within the immediate surrounds of the proposed works were noted. Given the limited scale and scope of the proposed works, in-combination impacts to the identified Natura 2000 sites within this report as a result of the proposed works are not envisaged.

4.10 Conclusion of Screening Stage

This screening for appropriate assessment was undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of the proposed works, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The proposed works described, are within the zone of potential influence of three Natura 2000 sites. It has been objectively concluded that the following sites are not likely to be significantly affected by the proposed works, and can therefore be screened out for appropriate assessment:

- Lower River Suir SAC
- Comeragh Mountains SAC
- Hugginstown Fen SAC

Reasons for Conclusion:

- There will be no impacts to water quality as a result of the proposed project;
- There is no potential for impacts on the qualifying interests for which Natura 2000 sites are designated. As such, there would be no significant direct or indirect impact on qualifying habitat or species associated with Natura 2000 sites;
- The lack of significant in-combination effects arising from other proposed and permitted developments in the vicinity.

Measures intended to avoid or reduce negative effects on the European sites have not been relied upon in reaching this conclusion.

A Finding of No Significant Effects Report (FONSE) has been prepared and is presented in **Appendix 2**.

5. References

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) (2009). *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

European Commission (EC) (2000). *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

European Commission (EC) (2001). *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Comeragh Mountains SAC 001952. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Hugginstown Fen SAC 000404. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Appendix 1

Stages of Appropriate Assessment

Stage 1 - Screening

This is the first stage of the Appropriate Assessment process and that undertaken to determine the likelihood of significant impacts as a result of a proposed project or plan. It determines need for a full Appropriate Assessment.

If it can be concluded that no significant impacts to Natura 2000 Sites are likely then the assessment can stop here. If not, it must proceed to Stage 2 for furthermore detailed assessment.

Stage 2 - Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

The second stage of the Appropriate Assessment process assesses the impact of the proposal (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of the Natura 2000 Site with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and its ecological structure and function. This is a much more detailed assessment than Stage 1. A Natura Impact Statement containing a professional scientific examination of the proposal is required and includes any mitigation measure to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts.

If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e. adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation, the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned.

Stage 3 - Assessment of alternative solutions

A detailed assessment must be undertaken to determine whether alternative ways of achieving the objective of the project/plan exists.

Where no alternatives exist the project/plan must proceed to Stage 4.

Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a Natura 2000 Site where no less damaging solution exists.

Appendix 2

Finding of No Significant Effects Report

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS MATRIX	
European Site	Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)
Name of project or plan	Replacement of Clairín pedestrian rail bridge - Carrick-on-Suir
Name and location of Natura 2000 site	Lower River Suir SAC – 0.4km Comeragh Mountains SAC – 11.8km Hugginstown Fen SAC – 15.4km
Description of the project	Replacement of Clairín pedestrian rail bridge
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site	No
THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site(s).	No impact is envisaged as a result of the proposed works.
List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e- mail address.	N/A
Response to consultation.	N/A
DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT	
Who carried out the assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aileen O’Connor, Environmental Scientist with Malachy Walsh and Partners • Fergus Doyle, Environmental Scientist with Malachy Walsh and Partners
Sources of data	Refer to references.
Level of assessment completed	Desktop study and Field Study