Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1121 Arklow-Lodgewood 220kV Line Uprate [Exempted Development] Counties Wicklow and Wexford

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended ('the Regulations'), EirGrid has undertaken Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of relevant European sites, if CP1121 Arklow-Lodgewood 220kV Line Uprate [Exempted Development] ('the Development'), individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will result in likely significant effects on a European site(s).

The Development comprises the following:

- Replacement of conductor and earthwire.
- Replacement of the following towers; 46, 47, 48, 49, and 50.
- Stringing 2.5km of new 220kV conductor.
- Steelwork replacement of towers (required for every tower).
- Foundation strengthening of towers (required for 32 towers out of 111 towers).
- Replacement of equipment and apparatus on towers.
- Ancillary work.

Analysis of Pathways to European sites

The closest European site to the Development is Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 000781[1]). The SAC is extensive, comprising the freshwater stretches of the River Slaney as far as the Wicklow Mountains and includes a number of tributaries, the estuary at Ferrycarrig, and Wexford Harbour. The Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the SAC comprise a range of Annex I habitats and the Annex II species freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, otter *Lutra lutra*, salmon *Salmo salar*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, twaite shad *Alosa fallax fallax*, and harbour seal *Phoca vitulina*.

Slaney River Valley SAC is present parallel to the overhead line (OHL) between Lodgewood 220kV Substation and tower 53, and is oversailed by the OHL between towers 52 and 53. However, the distance between the OHL and SAC is largely >1.5km ('as the crow flies'), except between towers 53 and 57, where the SAC is between c. 145-215m from the Development. In addition, several towers (which require foundation strengthening) are in proximity (50m deemed a suitable maximum distance) of watercourses (as identified on the Tailte Éireann PRIME2 Watercourses layer) that are hydrologically connected to the River Bann (which is within the SAC). These comprise the following:

- Tower 56: which is located 29m from the Bann_020 watercourse which is connected to the River Bann c. 190m downstream via unnamed drainage ditches.
- Tower 84: which is located 45m from the Camolin Stream_010 watercourse which is connected to the River Bann c. 6.5km downstream.
- Tower 87: which is located 12m from the Bann_060 watercourse which is connected to the River Bann c. 5.2km downstream.
- Tower 108: which is located 17m from Ballycarney Stream_020 which is connected to the River Bann c. 3.1km downstream.

[1] NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: Slaney River Valley SAC 000781. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

An ecology walkover survey was undertaken at Tower 56 in 2025, and no evidence of protected / notable species or habitats were recorded at the tower or the adjacent watercourse.

There are no waterbodies in proximity to the towers that require replacement (46, 47, 48, 49, and 50). The tower replacement will be a 'like-for-like' replacement.

The Development also oversails numerous other watercourses, some of which are hydrologically connected to the SAC. However, there will be no works in or adjacent to any of these watercourses. Furthermore, the works are of a nature which means that significant waterborne pollution events cannot occur, for example, no large excavations are required which could result in substantial volumes of sediment being generated, and access to towers will be planned so as to avoid proximity to watercourses (though may involve some vegetation clearance). In any case, the hydrological distances between towers 56, 84, 87, and 108 and the SAC is quite extensive, and therefore not likely a viable pathway. Standard pollution and sedimentation measures will also be required (N.B. that this is not specific mitigation to safeguard a European site and is required to meet legal obligations). Therefore, there is no likelihood for significant effects on Slaney River Valley SAC regarding water quality.

The works associated with the Development are relatively minor in nature and not of a type that could cause significant disturbance of aquatic species, including fish. Works will be temporary, taking place at any given location over a short period of time. Given, therefore, that works will be set back from watercourses, will be temporary and short-term, and minor in nature, likely significant effects on aquatic QI species associated with Slaney River Valley SAC as a result of disturbance are excluded.

Otter is a mobile QI species that may occur in functionally linked habitat beyond the SAC boundary, particularly where suitable watercourses that they may traverse the Development are present. The majority of towers are located within agricultural habitats and are sufficiently distant from watercourses to avoid impacts to otter holts (otter holts can be impacted up to 20m away by machinery[2]). These watercourses are very minor streams or field drains, which are not likely to be suitable for otter holts, particularly for breeding holts. In addition, as a largely crepuscular species, daytime works at towers are not likely to cause disturbance to ex-situ otters. Given, therefore, that works will be set back from watercourses, will be temporary and short-term, and minor in nature, likely significant effects on otter associated with Slaney River Valley SAC as a result of disturbance are excluded.

Due to the distance of the Development from the SAC, there will be no impacts or effects to Annex I habitats due to the Development. The Development is sufficiently remote from Annex I habitats within the SAC to rule out effects to groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems or effects arising from air pollution. There are no other impact sources that could result in likelihood of significant effects to the SAC.

The works associated with the Development will be temporary and take place in any one location for a short period of time only. They are also relatively minor in nature, and not substantially different to routine agricultural activities that may occur in proximity to the Development. There are vast areas of alternative foraging habitat available for Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), thus likely significant effects as a result of disturbance are excluded. There is no hydrological connectivity between the Development and any SPA, so likely significant effects from the Development in relation to water quality are excluded. There are no other impact sources that could result in likelihood of significant effects to any SPA.

There are no other European sites nearby or potentially connected to the Development via a source-pathway-receptor link that may result in likely significant effects in view of the relevant European site's Conservation Objectives.

[2] NRA (2008). Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters Prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes (online). Available at https://www.tii.ie/media/wsmlbxmv/guidelines-for-the-treatment-of-otters-prior-to-the-construction-of-national-road-schemes.pdf (Accessed 18 December 2025).

The impacts of the Development itself are small and will occur over a short period of time such that there is no possibility of the impacts of other projects or plans acting in-combination to give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites.

AA Screening Statement

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI 477 as amended, EirGrid has made a Determination following Screening that an Appropriate Assessment is not required, as the project individually or in-combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on any European sites. The risk of likely significant effects on European sites can be excluded on the basis of objective evidence.

This Determination is based on the location, scale, extent and duration of the Development, including temporary works, and has not taken account of measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



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Susanne Dunne ACIEEM Senior Ecologist

16 July 2026