# Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

## CP1358 Thornsberry 110kV Station [Exempted Development] County Offaly

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, whether CP1358 Thornsberry 110kV Station [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 involves:

- New OTF connection into bays within Thornsberry 110 kV Substation.
- Upgrade existing sectionalising bay to include Circuit Breaker and Current Transformer.

All works are to be carried out entirely within the boundary of the existing energised substation. All works for the Development will be carried out above ground on existing structures. No vegetation clearance or intrusive works will be required for the Development.

**Analysis of Pathways to European sites**

Based on the works involved, the following possible impacts were assessed:

- Disturbance of qualifying species (e.g. visual, noise, vibration or artificial light). According to published research[1], the maximum distance to which non-breeding bird species for which SPAs are designated may theoretically travel to forage is 20km from the boundary of such a site (though in reality, most species foraging distances are significantly lower than this). Cutts *et al.* (2013)[2] provides species-specific information on the sensitivity of several bird species which are qualifying features of SPAs to disturbance impacts from construction works.

Consequently, the following European site is considered to potentially be within the zone of influence (ZoI) of the Development:

- Lough Ennell SPA (site code 004044[3]), located c. 16.2km north of the Development. Designated for wetlands and waterbirds, comprising pochard *Aythya ferina,* tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* and coot *Fulica atra.* There is no hydrological connection between the SPA and the Development.

All works associated with the Development will take place within the existing substation boundary containing hardstanding and electrical installations, an area containing no suitable habitat for foraging Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of Lough Ennell SPA. The relatively minor nature of the works, which will occur for a short period of time only, the distance of the works from Lough Ennell SPA boundary and the lack of any supporting habitat for SCI associated with this SPA indicate that there are no pathways for likely significant effects.

[1] Scottish Natural Heritage (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Version 3 – June 2016 (online). Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/assessing-connectivity-special-protection-areas (Accessed 19 January 2026).

[2] Cutts, N., Hemingway, K and Spencer, J. (2013). Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit: Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects. Produced by the Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS) University of Hull. (online). Available at: https://www.tide-toolbox.eu/tidetools/waterbird_disturbance_mitigation_toolkit/ (Accessed 27 January 2026).

[3] NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ennell SPA 004044. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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.

**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

19 August 2026