Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

CP1467 Ardnacrusha 110kV Station Works (Caherhurly) Project [Exempted Development] County Clare

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 the CP1467 Ardnacrusha 110kV Station Works (Caherhurly) Project [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 trenching and laying of a new electricity cable and associated works within Ardnacrusha 110kV Station, from the palisade fence into the basement of the Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) building.

Analysis of Pathways to European Sites

The European sites that lie closest to the Development are the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC, site code 002165[1]) and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA, site code 004077[2]). The SAC is designated for Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats and species (freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncates* and otter *Lutra lutra*). The SPA is designated for a range of Special Conservation Interest (SCI) bird species, including waders, waterfowl and other waterbird species. Both European sites are sensitive to negative changes in water quality resulting from construction works and are hydrologically connected to the North Ballycannan River, which adjoins Ardnacrusha 110kV Station, at approximate flowpath distances of 1.8km and 5.6km, respectively. Due to the long flowpath distance, allowing for sufficient dilution and attenuation of water pollutants, there will be no likely significant effects on the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA regarding water quality.

In relation to the Lower River Shannon SAC, it should be noted that all of its QI species except for common bottlenose dolphin may utilise and depend on hydrologically linked waterbodiesbut are primarily associated with the Shannon River.

All construction works for the Development will be undertaken within the boundary of Ardnacrusha 110kV Station, which has an operational drainage system in place that attenuates water pollutants adequately. Therefore, the Development will not result in likely significant effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC regarding water quality.

Construction works have the potential to result in visual and noise disturbance to QI/SCI species, if using functionally-linked habitats adjoining the Development. However, the closest arable field that could be used by SCI birds from the SPA lies approximately 229m to the south of the Station boundary, and this is shielded from the Development by a strip of woodland.

QI otter from the SAC may roam along and forage within the North Ballycannan River adjoining the Development. However likely significant effects from the Development in relation to visual/noise disturbance will not occur, due to the limited scale and temporary nature of construction works (which will not be undertaken at night when otter are most active). Extensive

[1] NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Shannon SAC 002165. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
[2] NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA 004077. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

areas of suitable foraging habitats (e.g. grassland and agricultural fields) are available much closer to the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries 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 applicable site 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 the temporary nature of works, and has not taken account of mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce significant effects on European sites.

Signed:



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29 July 2024 (revised 24 October 2024)