

# AA Determination Statement

## Introduction

The purpose of this Appropriate Assessment (AA) Determination Statement is to provide a statement for the public and relevant bodies to ascertain that an AA has been conducted in accordance with relevant regulations. The purpose is to allow interested parties to assess the competent authority determination.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) is implemented in Ireland by S.I. No. 477/2011: European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011, S.I. No. 355/2015: European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 and Planning and Development Acts 2000-2015, as amended. The requirement for AA is set out in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

In summary, Article 6(3) of the Directive requires an Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken when there is an element of doubt about whether the integrity of a protected site might be affected by the proposed project. The focus of the assessment is the implications that the proposed project/development may have in the context of the rationale behind why an area was designated for protection. Article 6(3) continues that statutory approval can only be granted provided the assessment has indicated that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the site. In cases where the integrity of a site is or maybe effected then the requirements of Article 6(4) apply.

## The Plan or Project

The Office of Public Works (OPW) National Arterial Drainage Maintenance List of Activities 2018-2021 is a plan with the objective of maintaining arterial drainage schemes across the country. The plan covers maintenance activities which can be applied to any channel, embankment or structure that is part of an Arterial Drainage Scheme. The plan is to be carried out over four years (2018 to 2021). The plan will be carried out by the OPW under the Arterial Drainage Act (1945). All maintenance activity will be subject to a staggered and rolling programme of five year maintenance plans for each Arterial Drainage Schemes in Ireland.

The OPW has commissioned JBA Consulting to prepare a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and a Natura Impact Statement to inform the OPW, as competent authority, in their Appropriate Assessment of the project.

The Office of Public Works is the competent authority for this project.

A detailed description of the project is included in the Natura Impact Statement. The plan outlines the maintenance activities that could be carried out.

## Potential Impacts

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment identified the aspects of the project which can, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, affect European sites in the light of their conservation objectives.

Table 1. Aspects of the plan/project with potential impacts on European Sites

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
Maintenance works	Akeragh, Banna And Barrow Harbour SAC (000332)
- Reduction in habitat diversity & stability	Anglesey Road SAC (002125)
- Removal of riffle-glide-pool sequence	Ardagullion Bog SAC (002341)
- Habitat deterioration	Ardgraique Bog SAC (002356)
- Habitat loss	Ardkill Turlough SAC (000461)
- Species loss and reduction in species populations	Ardmore Head SAC (002123)
	Ardrahan Grassland SAC (002244)
	Arroo Mountain SAC (001403)

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Habitat and species fragmentation</li> <li>- Increased turbidity, suspended solids &amp; sedimentation</li> <li>- Accidental spills and pollution causing damage or loss to habitats and species</li> <li>- Alterations in flow regime</li> <li>- Impairment of riparian zone</li> <li>- Lowering of water levels and alterations in water quantity</li> <li>- Spread of non-native species</li> <li>- Visual, Lighting and Noise disturbance to sensitive species</li> </ul>	Askeaton Fen Complex SAC (002279) Aughris Head SPA (004133) Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199) Baldoyle Bay SPA (004016) Balla Turlough SAC (000463) Ballinafad SAC (002081) Ballinduff Turlough SAC (002295) Ballinskelligs Bay And Inny Estuary SAC (000335) Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA (004234) Ballinturly Turlough SAC (000588) Ballyallia Lake SAC (000014) Ballyallia Lough SPA (004041) Ballyarr Wood SAC (000116) Ballycullinan Lake SAC (000016) Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building SAC (002246) Ballyhoorisky Point To Fanad Head SAC (001975) Ballyhoura Mountains SAC (002036) Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong SAC (000474) Ballymore Fen SAC (002313) Ballyogan Lough SAC (000019) Ballysadare Bay SAC (000622) Ballysadare Bay SPA (004129) Ballyseedy Wood SAC (002112) Ballyteige (Clare) SAC (000994) Ballyteige Burrow SAC (000696) Ballyteigue Burrow SPA (004020) Ballyvaughan Turlough SAC (000996) Bandon River SAC (002171) Bannow Bay SAC (000697) Bannow Bay SPA (004033) Barley Cove To Ballyrisode Point SAC (001040) Barrigone SAC (000432) Barroughter Bog SAC (000231) Beara Peninsula SPA (004155) Bellacorick Bog Complex SAC (001922) Bellanagare Bog SAC (000592) Bellanagare Bog SPA (004105) Ben Bulbin, Gleniff And Glenade Complex SAC (000623) Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex SAC (000020) Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170) Blackwater River (Kerry) SAC (002173) Blasket Islands SAC (002172) Boleybrack Mountain SAC (002032) Bolingbrook Hill SAC (002124) Boyne Coast And Estuary SAC (001957) Boyne Estuary SPA (004080) Bricklieve Mountains & Keishcorran SAC (001656) Bunduff Lough And Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC (000625) Caha Mountains SAC (000093) Caherglassaun Turlough SAC (000238) Cahermore Turlough SAC (002294)

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	<p>Cahore Marshes SPA (004143)            Cahore Polders And Dunes SAC (000700)            Callow Bog SAC (000595)            Carlingford Lough SPA (004078)            Carlingford Mountain SAC (000453)            Carlingford Shore SAC (002306)            Carn Park Bog SAC (002336)            Carnsore Point SAC (002269)            Carrowbaun, Newhall And Ballylee Turloughs SAC (002293)            Carrowkeel Turlough SAC (000475)            Carrowmore Dunes SAC (002250)            Carrowmore Point To SPANish Point And Islands SAC (001021)            Castlemaine Harbour SAC (000343)            Castlemaine Harbour SPA (004029)            Castletaylor Complex SAC (000242)            Castletownshend SAC (001547)            Charleville Wood SAC (000571)            Clara Bog SAC (000572)            Clare Glen SAC (000930)            Cleanderry Wood SAC (001043)            Cliffs of Moher SPA (004005)            Clogher Head SAC (001459)            Cloghernagore Bog And Glenveagh National Park SAC (002047)            Clonakilty Bay SAC (000091)            Clonakilty Bay SPA (004081)            Clonaslee Eskers And Derry Bog SAC (000859)            Cloonakillina Lough SAC (001899)            Cloonee And Inchiquin Loughs, Uragh Wood SAC (001342)            Cloonmoylan Bog SAC (000248)            Cloonshanville Bog SAC (000614)            Cloughmoyne SAC (000479)            Ciyard Kettle-Holes SAC (000480)            Comeragh Mountains SAC (001952)            Connemara Bog Complex SAC (002034)            Coole-Garryland Complex SAC (000252)            Coole-Garryland SPA (004107)            Coolrain Bog SAC (002332)            Corbo Bog SAC (002349)            Corofin Wetlands SPA (004220)            Corratirrim SAC (000979)            Courtmacsherry Bay SPA (004219)            Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC (001230)            Cregg House Stables, Crusheen SAC (002317)            Cregganna Marsh SPA (004142)            Croaghonagh Bog SAC (000129)            Cuilcagh - Anierin Uplands SAC (000584)            Cullahill Mountain SAC (000831)            Cummeen Strand SPA (004035)            Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (000627)</p>

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	Curraghchase Woods SAC (000174) Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC (000030) Derrinea Bog SAC (000604) Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC (001873) Derrycrag Wood Nature Reserve SAC (000261) Derryveagh And Glendowan Mountains SPA (004039) Dingle Penninsula SPA (004153) Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC (000133) Donegal Bay SPA (004151) Doocastle Turlough SAC (000492) Dromore Woods And Loughs SAC (000032) Drongawn Lough SAC (002187) Drumalough Bog SAC (002338) Drumcliff Bay SPA (004013) Drummin Wood SAC (002181) Dunbeacon Shingle SAC (002280) Dundalk Bay SAC (000455) Dundalk Bay SPA (004026) Dungarvan Harbour SPA (004032) Dunmuckrum Turloughs SAC (002303) Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau SAC (001125) East Burren Complex SAC (001926) Eirk Bog SPA (004108) Errit Lough SAC (000607) Fanad Head SPA (004148) Farranamanagh Lough SAC (002189) Flughany Bog SAC (000497) Fortwilliam Turlough SAC (000448) Galley Head to Duneen Point SPA (004190) Galmoy Fen SAC (001858) Galtee Mountains SAC (000646) Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) Garriskil Bog SAC (000679) Garriskill Bog SPA (004102) Glanlough Woods SAC (002315) Glanmore Bog SAC (001879) Glen Bog SAC (001430) Glen Lough SPA (004045) Glenade Lough SAC (001919) Glensmole Valley SAC (001209) Glendine Wood SAC (002324) Glendree Bog SAC (001912) Glengarriff Harbour And Woodland SAC (000090) Glenomra Wood SAC (001013) Glenstal Wood SAC (001432) Gortacarnaun Wood SAC (002180) Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement SAC (001271) Greaghans Turlough SAC (000503) Helvick Head SAC (000665) Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (004192) Hook Head SAC (000764) Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA (004194) Howth Head Coast SPA (004113)

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	<p>Howth Head SAC (000202)</p> <p>Hugginstown Fen SAC (000404)</p> <p>Inagh River Estuary SAC (000036)</p> <p>Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)</p> <p>Iveragh Peninsula SPA (004154)</p> <p>Iveragh Penninsula SPA (004154)</p> <p>Keeper Hill SAC (001197)</p> <p>Kenmare River SAC (002158)</p> <p>Kerry Head SPA (004189)</p> <p>Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC (000647)</p> <p>Kilduff, Devilsbit Mountain SAC (000934)</p> <p>Kildun Souterrain SAC (002320)</p> <p>Kilgarvan Ice House SAC (000364)</p> <p>Kilglassan/Caheravoostia Turlough Complex SAC (000504)</p> <p>Kilkee Reefs SAC (002264)</p> <p>Kilkeran Lake And Castlefreke Dunes SAC (001061)</p> <p>Kilkishen House SAC (002319)</p> <p>Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC (000458)</p> <p>Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (004036)</p> <p>Killarney National Park SAC (004038)</p> <p>Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy'S Reeks And Caragh River Catchment SAC (000365)</p> <p>Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (000006)</p> <p>Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC (001741)</p> <p>Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (001786)</p> <p>Kiltartan Cave (Coole) SAC (000286)</p> <p>Kiltiernan Turlough SAC (001285)</p> <p>Knockacoller Bog SAC (002333)</p> <p>Knockalongy And Knockachree Cliffs SAC (001669)</p> <p>Knockanira House SAC (002318)</p> <p>Lackan Saltmarsh And Kilcummin Head SAC (000516)</p> <p>Lady'S Island Lake SAC (000704)</p> <p>Lady's Island Lake SPA (004009)</p> <p>Leannan River SAC (002176)</p> <p>Levally Lough SAC (000295)</p> <p>Lisbigney Bog SAC (000869)</p> <p>Liskeenan Fen SAC (001683)</p> <p>Lisnageeragh Bog And Ballinastack Turlough SAC (000296)</p> <p>Loop Head SPA (004119)</p> <p>Lough Arrow SAC (001673)</p> <p>Lough Arrow SPA (004050)</p> <p>Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC (002120)</p> <p>Lough Carra SPA (004051)</p> <p>Lough Carra/Mask Complex SAC (001774)</p> <p>Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (004228)</p> <p>Lough Corrib SAC (000297)</p> <p>Lough Corrib SPA (004042)</p> <p>Lough Coy SAC (002117)</p> <p>Lough Cutra SAC (000299)</p> <p>Lough Cutra SPA (004056)</p> <p>Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA (004057)</p>

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	<p>Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (004058)  Lough Derg, North-East Shore SAC (002241)  Lough Derravaragh SPA (004043)  Lough Ennell SAC (000685)  Lough Ennell SPA (004044)  Lough Fern SPA (004060)  Lough Fingall Complex SAC (000606)  Lough Gara SPA (004048)  Lough Gash Turlough SAC (000051)  Lough Gill SAC (001976)  Lough Golagh And Breesy Hill SAC (002164)  Lough Hoe Bog SAC (000633)  Lough Hyne Nature Reserve And Environs SAC (000097)  Lough Iron SPA (004046)  Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA (004061)  Lough Lene SAC (002121)  Lough Lurgreen Bog/Glenamaddy Turlough SAC (000301)  Lough Mask SAC (004062)  Lough Mask SPA (004062)  Lough Melvin SAC (000428)  Lough Nabrickeagh Bog SAC (000634)  Lough Nageage SAC (002135)  Lough Oughter And Associated Loughs SAC (000007)  Lough Oughter Complex SPA (004049)  Lough Owel SAC (000688)  Lough Owel SPA (004047)  Lough Rea SAC (000304)  Lough Rea SPA (004134)  Lough Ree SAC (000440)  Lough Ree SPA (004064)  Lough Sheelin SPA (004065)  Lough Swilly SAC (002287)  Lough Swilly SPA (004075)  Lough Yganavan And Lough Nambrackdarrig SAC (000370)  Loughatorick South Bog SAC (000308)  Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)  Lower River Suir SAC (002137)  Magharee Islands SPA (004125)  Malahide Estuary SAC (000205)  Malahide Estuary SPA (004025)  Maulagowna Bog SAC (001881)  Maumturk Mountains SAC (002008)  Meenaguse Scragh SAC (001880)  Meentygrannagh Bog SAC (000173)  Mid-Clare Coast SPA (004182)  Middle Shannon Callows SPA (004096)  Mid-Waterford Coast SPA (004193)  Moanour Mountain SAC (002257)  Moanveanlagh Bog SAC (002351)  Mocorha Lough SAC (001536)</p>

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	Moneen Mountain SAC (000054) Moneybeg And Clareisland Bogs SAC (002340) Monivea Bog SAC (002352) Moore Hall (Lough Carra) SAC (000527) Mouds Bog SAC (002331) Mount Brandon SAC (000375) Mount Hevey Bog SAC (002342) Moyree River System SAC (000057) Mucksna Wood SAC (001371) Mullaghanish Bog SAC (001890) Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC (001932) Myross Wood SAC (001070) Newgrove House SAC (002157) Newhall And Edenvale Complex SAC (002091) Nier Valley Woodlands SAC (000668) North Bull Island SPA (004006) North Dublin Bay SAC (000206) North Inishowen Coast SAC (002012) Old Domestic Building (Keevagh) SAC (002010) Old Domestic Building, Askive Wood SAC (002098) Old Domestic Building, Curraglass Wood SAC (002041) Old Domestic Building, Dromore Wood SAC (000353) Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane SAC (002314) Old Farm Buildings, Ballymacrogan SAC (002245) Old Head of Kinsale SPA (004021) Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC (000534) Ox Mountains Bogs SAC (002006) Peterswell Turlough SAC (000318) Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve SAC (004099) Philipston Marsh SAC (001847) Pollagoona Bog SAC (002126) Pollnacknockaun Wood Nature Reserve SAC (000319) Pouladatig Cave SAC (000037) Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (004063) Poulnagordon Cave (Quin) SAC (000064) Puffin Island SPA (004003) Rahasane Turlough SAC (000322) Rahasane Turlough SPA (004089) Raheenmore Bog SAC (000582) Ratty River Cave SAC (002316) Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC (000710) Red Bog, Kildare SAC (000397) Reen Point Shingle SAC (002281) River Barrow And River Nore SAC (002162) River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC (002299) River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232) River Finn SAC (002301) River Moy SAC (002298) River Nanny Estuary And Shore SPA (004158) River Nore SPA (004233) River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077) River Shannon Callows SAC (000216)

Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	Roaringwater Bay And Islands SAC (000101) Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC SAC (003000) Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208) Rogerstown Estuary SPA (004015) Ross Lake And Woods SAC (001312) Rosturra Wood SAC (001313) Rye Water Valley/Carlton SAC (001398) Scragh Bog SAC (000692) Screen Hills SAC (000708) Seven Heads SPA (004191) Sheep'S Head SAC (000102) Sheeps Head to Toe Head SPA (004156) Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog SAC (000382) Shrule Turlough SAC (000525) Silvermine Mountains SAC (000939) Silvermines Mountains West SAC (002258) Skealaghan Turlough SAC (000541) Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA (004168) Slieve Beagh SPA (004167) Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC (002312) Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (000412) Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (004160) Slieve Mish Mountains SAC (002185) Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (004165) Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA (004187) Sonnagh Bog SAC (001913) South Dublin Bay amd River Tolka Estuary SPA (004024) South Dublin Bay SAC (000210) Spahill And Clomantagh Hill SAC (000849) Split Hills And Long Hill Esker SAC (001831) Stabannan-Braganstown SPA (004091) Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (004161) Streedagh Point Dunes SAC (001680) Tacumshin Lake SAC (000709) Tacumshin Lake SPA (004092) Tamur Bog SAC (001992) Templehouse And Cloonacleigha Loughs SAC (000636) Termon Lough SAC (001321) The Loughans SAC (000407) The Raven SPA (004019) Thomastown Quarry SAC (002252) Three Castle Head To Mizen Head SAC (000109) Toonagh Estate SAC (002247) Tory Hill SAC (000439) Towerhill House SAC (002179) Tralee Bay And Magharees Peninsula, West To Cloghane SAC (002070) Tralee Bay Complex SPA (004188) Tramore Back Strand SPA (004027) Tramore Dunes And Backstrand SAC (000671) Tullaghanrock Bog SAC (002354)



Aspect of plan/project with potential impacts	European sites with potential impacts
	Tullagher Lough And Bog SAC (002343) Turloughmore (Sligo) SAC (000637) Union Wood SAC (000638) Unshin River SAC (001898) Urlaur Lakes SAC (001571) Valencia Harbour/Portmagee Channel SAC (002262) White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo SAC (001810) Wicklow Mountains SAC (002122) Wicklow Mountains SPA (004040) Williamstown Turloughs SAC (002296)

### Assessment of Potential Impacts

The Natura Impact Statement (NIS) documents the how the AA is based upon complete, precise and definitive findings and have no lacunae or gaps.

The Screening for AA and NIS reports have been prepared by Anne Murray BSc MCIEEM, Tanya Slattery BSc MSc MSc(Res) and Niamh Sweeney BSc MSc.

The following methods and standards have been followed:

Desktop data sources:

- A comprehensive desktop survey
- Ecological surveys
- The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website (<https://www.npws.ie/>), where site synopses, Natura 2000 data forms and conservation objectives were obtained.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>)
- Environmental Protection Agency maps website (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>)
- River Basin Management Plans ([www.wfdireland.ie](http://www.wfdireland.ie))
- Catchments ([www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie))
- Planning website ([www.eplanning.ie](http://www.eplanning.ie))
- OPW drainage maps (<http://maps.opw.ie/drainage/map/>)

The NIS was prepared with reference to the following documents:

- DoEHLG (2009 rev 2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG 2009).
- European Communities (EC) (2000) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission (European Commission and Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 2000).
- EC (2002) 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, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission (EC 2002).
- EC (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding

public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission. European Commission (EC 2007).

- EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission (EC 2013).
- Ryan Hanley (2014a) Office of Public Works Arterial Drainage Maintenance Environmental Services 2013. Stage 1: Appropriate Assessment Screening Methodology for the Maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes. Methodology. Unpublished Report.
- Ryan Hanley (2014b) Office of Public Works Arterial Drainage Maintenance Service 2014-2018. Source > Pathway > Receptor Chains for Appropriate Assessment. Unpublished Report.
- NPWS (2008). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland (NPWS 2008).
- NPWS (2013a). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Habitats Assessment Volume 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.
- NPWS (2013b). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Species Assessment Volume 3. Habitats Assessment Volume 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.

Nomenclature for higher plants followed;

- Parnell, J. and Curtis, T. (2012) Webb's - An Irish Flora. Cork University Press.

### **AA Screening**

A previous AA screening exercise on this scheme by JBA in 2014, found that this scheme had the potential to negatively impact upon the three Natura sites. The screening was conducted using Ryan Hanley's methodology of three source > pathway > receptor chains (Ryan Hanley 2014b).

This methodology is based on source > pathway > receptor chain principles and involves assessing likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the proposed drainage maintenance in relation to three pathways:

- Surface water
- Groundwater
- Land & air

The screening assessment involves assessing the impacts of drainage maintenance operations within the arterial drainage scheme, and its zone of influence, in relation to each of the three pathways individually. The results of each pathway are then combined in a concluding section to identify if/where likely significant effects may arise.

The screening process uses a combination of GIS analysis and qualitative assessment to identify which drainage maintenance activities, on which specific watercourses, are likely to have significant effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

### **Impact Assessment**

A screening assessment, conducted by JBA ecologists for each Arterial Drainage Scheme in 2014, was reviewed and updated during the production of the NIS. The data from the ecological survey on habitat and species distribution was then analysed and evaluated for relevance against the conservation objectives of the qualifying interests of the relevant Natura 2000 sites, using attributes, their measures and targets as well as site vulnerabilities.

Potential sources of impact from the proposed works and their pathways were assessed against attributes and targets of the qualifying interests for each Natura 2000 site. The detail of the assessment ensures that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to any potential impacts.

### **Cumulative and in-combination impacts**

Agricultural activities, developments and other plans and projects were assessed as unlikely to have any significant adverse impacts in-combination or cumulatively with the proposed OPW maintenance activity.

### **Avoidance and reduction of impacts**

Precautionary measures of avoiding carrying out works on particular habitats and during designated times of the year ensures that sensitive habitats and species are left undisturbed. The appropriate season for carrying out different types of maintenance activity is inherent to the project description. Specific measures to avoid and reduce potential impacts are documented in the NIS report mitigation measures section and the Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs) adhered to during the period of maintenance works. This ensures that there will be no significant residual impacts on the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites. Avoidance and mitigation measures are based upon the best current practise. Maintenance staff are trained in the implementation of the SOPs and specific mitigation measures. An audit process is followed to ensure compliance.

All maintenance work will be subject to scheme specific Screening for, and if necessary, full Appropriate Assessment prior to any maintenance works being carried out on any channel, embankment or structure.

### **Consultation**

Comments on a draft Natura Impact Statement have been received from NPWS and the EPA have provided comments on the draft accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report. The comments related to both the process of Appropriate Assessment of drainage maintenance activities and the specific implementation of these activities. The comments have been addressed in the Natura Impact Statement and the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

### **Conclusion**

The Commissioners of the Office of Public Works, as competent authority, is satisfied that this proposed plan on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely effect the integrity of any European Natura 2000 site.

This decision is based upon the complete, precise and definitive findings as presented in the Natura Impact Statement.

In making this decision we are satisfied that:

- The proposed plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites in question, in light of their conservation objectives.
- There will be no lasting or irreparable loss of part or whole of priority natural habitat type.
- European sites will be preserved at favourable conservation status.
- There is no threat of degradation or destruction of European Sites.

Full records of the assessment, reports, surveys, consultations and observations are held by the competent authority and available for public review as requested.

The conclusion necessarily relies on some assumptions and it was inevitably subject to some limitations. Most of the assumptions and limitations would not affect the conclusion but the following points are recorded in order to ensure the basis of the assessment is clear and no scientific doubt remains:

- This NIS has investigated the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed works upon Natura 2000 sites, assessed the potential impacts for significance alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. This process took into consideration

the nature of the proposed works and the structure, function and conservation objectives of the relevant Natura 2000 sites.

- Where significant adverse impacts were determined to potentially occur as a result of the works, a number of appropriate mitigation measures to be implemented during the scheme were provided in order to prevent any significant adverse impacts as a result of the scheme. The conclusion of this report is based on the assumption that during the works, staff will be made aware of the sensitive ecological features that may be present on site and will be competent to implement mitigation measures. Mitigation measures and SOPs will be followed as required in such circumstances.
- It is worth noting the Natura Impact Statement screening and assessment is correct as of February 2017. Any changes to Natura 2000 site designations, boundaries or conservation objectives will be addressed in the scheme specific Appropriate Assessment process.

### **Consistency with other assessments**

The Natura Impact Statement is consistent with the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Arterial Drainage Maintenance Activities 2018-2021.