

Finding of no significant effects report:

Name of project or plan:

America Europe Connect Ltd – Foreshore Licence application to conduct a marine survey in connection with proposed fibre optic cable from landfall at Killala Bay, Co. Mayo to Trondheim, Norway. Survey operations extending from landfall to the 12mile limit (FS 6598)

Name and location of Natura Site

The proposed survey area is shown in

- Drawing No. 1294-101, "Foreshore Licence Map 1 Site Investigations Route Offshore, Rev2, dated 8/07/2016
- Drawing No. 1294-102 "Foreshore Licence Map 2 Site Investigations Route Inshore, Rev1, dated 18/04/2016
- Drawing Number 1294-103 "Site Location Map 1 Landfall Option at Ross Beach, Killala", dated 15/03/2016
- Drawing Number 1294-104 "Site Location Map 2 Landfall Option at Enniscrone" dated 15/03/2016

The near shore elements of the marine survey are within the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SAC (Site code 000458) and the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA (Site Code 004036). The remainder of the proposed marine survey activities will not occur within any currently designated Natura 2000 sites.

The Conservation Objectives of the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC¹ are

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Narrow mouthed Whorl Snail in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Sea Lamprey in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation

¹ NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC 000458. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (*Glaucopuccinellietalia*) in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC,
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Humid dune slacks in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC

The Conservation Objectives of the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA² are:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Ringed Plover in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Plover in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Sanderling in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunlin in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar-tailed Godwit in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA,
- To maintain the favourable conservation

² NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA 004036. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Description of the project or plan

condition of Redshank in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetland habitat in Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.

The proposed geophysical survey includes the collection of bathymetric, sidescan sonar, sub-bottom profiler and magnetometer data along the survey route. The geotechnical survey includes the collection of seabed samples using corers and grabs, bar probing in shallow water (<3m depth) and Cone Penetration Tests along the survey route. The proposed survey includes options for landfall at either Ross Beach or Enniscrone.

The overall scope of the geotechnical works involves:

- 3 No. Trial Pits on the beach at Enniscrone
- 10 No. bar probes on the beach at Enniscrone
- 10 No. bar probes from the low water mark to the 3m depth contour
- 13 No. Grab samples from the 3m depth contour to the 15m depth contour
- 8No. Gravity Cores or Cone Penetration Tests from the 15m depth contour to the limit 12 nautical mile limit.

There is no requirement for any site investigations or intertidal survey works at Ross Beach

It is anticipated that the survey works would be completed within 2 weeks, subject to weather conditions.

It is anticipated that the investigations would take approximately 2 weeks to complete.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?

No

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

No

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.

The majority of the proposed marine survey activity will not take place within the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SAC or the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA.

The Narrow mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*) does not occur in the vicinity of the proposed site investigations and therefore no significant impact is likely.

The following habitats do not occur in the vicinity of the proposed site investigations and therefore no significant impact is likely:

- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand
- Atlantic salt meadows
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes)
- Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)
- Humid dune slacks

The following habitats occur along the survey route:

- Estuaries
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide.

There will be minor disturbance to these habitats during the survey works. The impacts will however, be localised and temporary. Key species or habitats are not likely to be impacted and the integrity of the site will not be adversely affected.

Harbour seals may be disturbed during the survey works. The impacts will however, be localised and temporary. There are no seal breeding, resting or moulting sites in the vicinity of the survey works. On this basis it is considered that significant impacts are not likely.

There may be disturbance to bird species during the survey works. Any such impacts will, however, be localised and temporary. Full implementation of the mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) submitted by the applicant will minimise any impacts on Brent geese

and other bird species of conservation interest in the area.

Full compliance with the requirements set out in the NPWS (2014) "Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound sources in Irish Waters" will minimise any impacts on marine mammals.

On the basis of the above it is considered that there will be no significant adverse effects as a result of the proposed marine survey on the Conservation Objectives of Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SAC or the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA

Who carried out the assessment?

The Marine Institute, on behalf of the MLVC, 02 December 2016