Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Determination on the installation of a hydro-electric generator at Sruffaunboy Stream, Connemara National Park in accordance with Regulation 42A EC (Birds and Natural) Habitats Regulations 2011-2021

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
npws.ie

Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Background 3

3. Legislation and Guidance 4

3.1. Guidance and Data Sources 4

3.2. Assessment Methodology 5

3.3. Legislative Background 5

4. Overview of the Project 8

4.1. Project Description 8

5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures 9

6. Part 2: Identification of European Sites within the Potential Zone of Influence of proposed activities 10

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects 10

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects 20

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA 21

10. Part 6: Conclusion 22

11. Supplementary Information 23

1. Introduction

This determination on Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been made by the Ecological Assessment Unit (EAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021 ('the 2011-2021 Regulations").[1]

On 3rd November 2024, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 42A(3) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') furnished the EAU with a request for a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination for the replacement / installation of a new hydro-electric generator within the Sruffaunboy Stream at the Connemara National Park Visitor Centre. The reinstatement of a generator will provide capacity for 38 MWh of power per annum reducing energy costs for the Park. The Connemara National Park Visitor Centre is adjacent to a European site, The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation [Site code: 002031]. Hereafter referred to as "the project".

The EAU have evaluated and analysed the information contained in the referred to above document and carried out a screening for AA of the proposed activities. The purpose of this document is to provide a record and an audit trail of the EAU reasoned thinking in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites.

[1] As inserted by Regulation 7 of the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

2. Background

Pursuant to Regulation 42A(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), a Screening for AA is required to be carried out on the proposed project. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) is transposed in Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended, and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

All plans and projects which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site, but which either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are likely to have a significant effect on a “European Site”, require that an AA of these effects to determine if they will adversely affect the integrity of these sites. The proposed project is considered to fall under the requirements of AA as applied to all plans and projects.

The Screening for AA process scrutinises the plan or project to determine if there is potential for likely significant effects either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European Site. European Sites are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Candidate SACs (cSACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). This AA Screening report describes the outcome of this analysis in respect of the project.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This section provides details on the adopted methodology with sources of guidance and information gathered to inform the preparation of the report.

3.1. Guidance and Data Sources

- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- AA of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- AA under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- Guidelines for Good Practice AA of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2018); [hereafter referred to as MN 2018];
- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01 - AA Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021); and,
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2021).

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during September 2024 include the following:

- National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations Viewer[2]; and,
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Maps[3].

3.3. Legislative Background

According to the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), Member States are required to establish a Natura 2000 network of sites of highest biodiversity importance for rare and threatened habitats and species across the EU.

In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises SACs, candidate SACs and SPAs.

SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II species (other than birds). SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and all migratory birds and their habitats. The Annex habitats and species, for which each site is selected, are the qualifying interests (QI) for SACs and special conservation interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site. Conservation Objectives for the site are defined for these QI/SCI.

A key requirement of the Habitats Directive is that the effects of any plan or project, which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site, but which alone, or in combination with, other plans or projects, are likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, should be assessed before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. The obligation to undertake a screening for AA, and if necessary, an AA, derives from Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and both involve a number of steps and tests that need to be applied in sequential order.

Article 6(3) is concerned with the strict protection of sites, while Article 6(4) is the procedure for allowing derogation from this strict protection in certain restricted circumstances.

[2] National Parks & Wildlife Service Designation Viewer. Accessed at ArcGIS Web Application 26th September 2024

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 26th September 2024

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

> "Any plan or project not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public".

Article 6(4) states:

> "If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.
>
> Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

The competent authority is required to carry out a screening for AA, and if necessary, an AA as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. If the competent authority determines that the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of a European site, it may only authorise that plan or project by following the Article 6(4) procedure.

The Article 6(3) and 6(4) procedures are outlined as follows:

Stage 1 - Screening for Appropriate Assessment – to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the project or plan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment – This is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project or plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The AA must include a final determination by the competent authority as to whether or not a proposed project would adversely affect the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. In order to reach a final determination, the competent authority must undertake examination, analysis and evaluation, followed by findings, conclusions and a final determination. The appropriate assessment must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions, and may not have lacunae or gaps.

Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions - the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain - an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

Under Regulation 42A(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), the Ecological Assessment Unit is the competent authority in relation to screening for AA of projects and plans (such as the proposed project) which the Minister proposes to undertake or adopt.

4. Overview of the Project

The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC is an extensive site situated in the north-west of Connemara in Co. Galway and dominated by mountainous terrain (Figure 1). The site is bounded to the south by the Connemara Bog Complex, to the east by the Maumturk Mountains and to the north by Killary Harbour. Included within the site are the Twelve Bens mountain range, the mountains to the north of Kylemore (Doughruagh, Garraun and Benchoona), rivers including the Ballynahinch and Owenglin systems and an area of coastal heath and machair near Glassilaun. The site also includes some extensive tracts of lowland blanket bog which are continuous with the mountains. Most of the mountain summits reach a height in excess of 500 m, the highest being Ben Baun in the Twelve Bens which reaches 730 m. The site includes a large portion of the Connemara National Park.

A hydro-electric scheme was previously installed on the Sruffaunboy Stream within Connemara National Park during the time when the Park buildings were owned by the Christian Brothers. The reinstatement of the hydro-electric scheme will provide 38 MWh of power per annum which would significantly improve energy costs for Connemara National Park. The water for the scheme will be sourced from the Sruffaunboy Stream. The stream does not have any potential to support Atlantic Salmon due to the impassable Sruffaunboy Waterfall in Ellis Woods downstream of the location. The Sruffaunboy Stream is not within a Freshwater Pearl Mussel (Margaritifera) Sensitive Area. All of the proposed works are adjacent to and outside the Twelve Bens/Garraun Special Area of Conservation (Figure 2). It is proposed that the works will take place from September 2024 to December 2025.

4.1. Project Description

The project entails several elements including the installation of an intake screen, water piping, of which a section is buried underground, and the installation of a new turbine within the existing Turbine House in Ellis Wood, Connemara National Park Visitor Centre. The elements of the project are as follows:

- Installation of a concrete intake screen within the Sruffaunboy Stream. The stream will be temporally diverted while the works take place.
- A pipe will be connected to the intake screen and continue along the stream bed and through the mill pond in front of the Visitor Centre. From there it will continue underground through amenity grassland before descending over ground to the existing Turbine House in Ellis Wood. The total length of the pipe will be approximately 200 metres.
- Connection of water pipe and Installation of turbine at existing Turbine House in Ellis Wood.

- A NPWS Authorised Officer will ensure the project can progress (access, route and egress) in compliance with Section 22 and Section 23 of those Acts prior to works (where applicable). The appointed contractor will ensure best practice guidance and procedures are adhered to in full accordance with all relevant legislation (where applicable). Work will be reviewed by the NPWS Authorised Officer / NPWS Regional management at regular intervals.

5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures

Answer these questions if the activity is "directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site". Otherwise go to Part 2.

a). List the European site(s) and the relevant Conservation Objectives (include version number of the Conservation Objective).

b). State how this activity furthers the Conservation Objective(s)

c). Does this activity have the potential to impact negatively on any Conservation Objective (CO), Qualifying Interest (QI)/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) for this or any other European site?

The effect on European Sites and their Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests within a defined Zone of Influence of the project was assessed using expert opinion. No significant adverse impacts on the QI or SCI features of any other SAC or SPA are anticipated.

Yes ☐ No ☑

d). Are there aspects of this activity which are NOT directly connected with the management of the site?

Yes ☑ No ☐

If the answer to EITHER of the above questions is **Yes** a Screening for AA is required, go to Part 2.

If the answer to BOTH questions is **No** go to Part 5.

6. Part 2: Identification of European Sites within the Potential Zone of Influence of proposed activities

List all European sites which may be affected by this activity because they are linked by an ecological pathway. If the site has a second European designation (SAC, SPA) this also needs to be considered

The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC [Site code: 002031].

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC 002031 Version 1. Accessed 6th November 2023.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002031.pdf

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects

Provide this information for **each site** listed in Part 2.

List the QI/SCIs for the site(s), their current conservation condition and the Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) for that QI/SCI. Then answer the questions about the impact on that QI/SCI.

The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC [Site code: 002031].

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests.

Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Typical species.
- Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation.
- Vegetation distribution: maximum depth.
- Hydrological regime: water level fluctuation.
- Lake substratum quality.

- Water quality: transparency; nutrients; phytoplankton biomass; phytoplankton composition; attached algal biomass; macrophyte status.
- Acidification status.
- Water colour.
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC).
- Turbidity.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.

Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Typical species.
- Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation.
- Vegetation distribution: maximum depth.
- Hydrological regime: water level fluctuation.
- Lake substratum quality.
- Water quality: transparency; nutrients; phytoplankton biomass; phytoplankton composition; attached algal biomass; macrophyte status.
- Acidification status.
- Water colour.
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC).
- Turbidity.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alpine and Boreal heaths in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes; positive indicator species; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; non-native species.
- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing; signs of browsing; burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Blanket bogs (* if active bog) in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients; peat formation; hydrology.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; lichens and bryophytes; potential dominant species; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage; erosion.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; Rynchospora spp; potential dominant species; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage; erosion.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes; positive indicator species; negative indicator species; non-native species; grass species and dwarf shrubs; bracken, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing; burning.
- Physical structure: disturbance.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator fern and Saxifraga species; positive indicator species; non-native species; bracken, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing; burning.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; non-native species; bracken, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Woodland size.
- Woodland structure: cover and height; community diversity and extent; natural regeneration; dead wood; veteran trees; indicators of local distinctiveness.
- Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicator species.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel Margaritifera margaritifera [1029]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Freshwater Pearl Mussel in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Population size
- Population structure: recruitment; adult mortality.
- Suitable habitat: extent; condition.
- Water quality: macroinvertebrate and phytobenthos (diatoms).
- Substratum quality: filamentous algae (macroalgae); macrophytes (rooted higher plants); sediment; oxygen availability.
- Hydrological regime: flow variability.
- Host fish
- Fringing habitat: area and condition

Salmon Salmo salar [1106]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy.
- Adult spawning fish.
- Salmon fry abundance.
- Out-migrating smolt abundance.
- Number and distribution of redds.
- Water quality

Otter Lutra lutra [1355]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Extent of terrestrial habitat.
- Extent of marine habitat.
- Extent of freshwater (lake) habitat.
- Couching sites and holts.
- Fish biomass available.
- Barriers to connectivity.

Slender Naiad Najas flexilis [1833]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Slender Naiad in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Population: extent; depth; viability; abundance.
- Species distribution.
- Habitat extent.
- Hydrological regime: water level fluctuations.
- Lake substratum quality.
- Water quality.
- Acidification status.
- Water colour.
- Associated species.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.
- Extent of marine habitat.

Tick all the boxes below which may apply.

Your answer will determine if the activity is likely to have a (negative) effect on this QI/SCI. Negative effects may arise because of the activity's location within the site; its proximity to the QI/SCI or the size of the land take involved; the abstraction of water or minerals; emissions or waste arising; the types of transport or machinery being used; the length of time involved or seasonality of the work.

a). There is likely to be a reduction in the area of QI/SCI habitat ☐

b). The physical/chemical quality of the environment is likely to be changed in a way which may cause the deterioration of the QI/SCI habitat (e.g. applying lime to an acidic soil) ☐

c). The structure of the ecological community is likely to be altered (e.g. through altered species composition) in a way which will have negative impact on the QI/SCI. ☐

d). A QI/SCI species is likely to be disturbed (e.g. through noise, vibrations) ☐

e). The population size, characteristics or reproductive success of a QI/SCI species is likely to be changed either directly or indirectly (e.g. lighting close to a bat roost entrance) ☐

f). QI/SCI species or habitats are likely to be more vulnerable to change or less resilient to external change (e.g. to flooding, fire or drought) ☐

g). There are likely to be effects on other species /habitats (not a QI/SCI for this site) which are ecologically linked with this QI/SCI and, as a consequence, there are likely to be negative effects on this QI/SCI (e.g. the impacts on geese which are the SCI when their non-QI feeding areas are damaged). ☐

h). This activity will cause a deterioration in the conservation condition of this QI/SCI. ☐

i). There are likely to be other ecological effects not listed above which are likely to have a significant effect on the QI/SCI. ☐

Explain the effects: **None of the above apply.**

The process of Screening for AA focuses on any interaction between the Site Specific Conservation Objectives and the effects of implementing the proposed installation of a hydro-electric turbine in Sruffaunboy Stream, Connemara National Park Visitor Centre.

The environmental effects of the project would be most likely to occur within or close to QIs of the SAC. The development or works footprint of the project does not occur within close proximity to any QI of the SAC.

The footprint of the work to install the turbine and water piping are not adjacent or close to any QI. There is no degree of connectivity with them and a source-pathway-receptor mechanism is clearly not evident.

The identification of a source-pathway-receptor risk does not automatically mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source, the characteristics of the pathway, and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the sensitivities of the European site and its QIs/SCIs). However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring during works, with the significance of the effect depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor. In cases where uncertainty exists, the precautionary principle must be applied.

The significance of effects should be determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the site concerned by the plan or project, taking particular account of the site's Conservation Objectives and ecological characteristics. The requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a *de minimis* threshold – thus, plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on the site are thereby excluded.

A likely significant effect is triggered when either:

- there is a probability or a risk of a plan or project having a significant effect on a European site;
- the plan or project is likely to undermine the site's Conservation Objectives; and
- a significant effect cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information.

The implementation of the proposed project as outlined above has been reviewed in relation to relevant Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) which conclude the following:

- The SSCOs for Otter have been examined and the location of the project does not occur within a specified 250m commuting zone for Otter as per the Site Specific Conservation Objectives Map 6 for the site[4]
- The SSCOs for Freshwater Pearl Mussel have been examined and the location is not within a Margaritifera i) catchment; distribution target area; or, suitable habitat.
- The SSCOs for Atlantic Salmon have been examined and there is no access into this section of the watercourse due to obstacles downstream of the location.
- The SSCOs for Slender Naiad have been examined and there are no possible pathways of hydrological connectivity between this QIs distribution and the project location.

If you have ticked a box for any QI/SCI in any of the sites affected by this activity the likelihood of a significant effect cannot be ruled out and the activity MUST be screened IN for AA.

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects

Is this activity likely to cause negative effects in combination with any other plan or project?

(In answering this question you should consider any other consents which have been applied for or granted. For example, other ARCs, planning consents, forestry consents, or activities authorised as part of an agreed farm or land management plan. List the plans or projects considered).

No ☑ **Yes** ☐ **Uncertain** ☐

If the answer is Yes or Uncertain the activity MUST be screened IN for AA. Fill in Part 5 accordingly.

[4] NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC 002031. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA

Screening not carried out as the activity is “directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site”. ☐

Likely significant effects are expected or uncertain.

This activity Screens **IN** and AA **is** required. ☐

Likely significant effects are NOT expected.

This activity Screens **OUT** AA **is not** required. ☑

Signature: Ryan Wilson-Parr, Head of Ecological Assessment

Date: 27th September 2024

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the project, including in particular, the nature of the changes that could occur and their potential relationship with European sites, as well as considering other plans and projects, and applying the precautionary principle, it is the EAU's view that likely significant effects on European sites can be ruled out.

The EAU determines[5], in accordance with Regulation 42A(7) of the 2011 Regulations, on the basis of objective scientific information following a screening under this Regulation that the proposed installation of a new hydro-electric turbine in the Sruffaunboy Stream at the Connemara National Park Visitor Centre, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not considered to have likely significant effects beyond reasonable doubt on a European Site(s) and an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

[5] Ryan Wilson-Parr (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 17th September 2024

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives. Version 1. (Red arrow indicates project location).

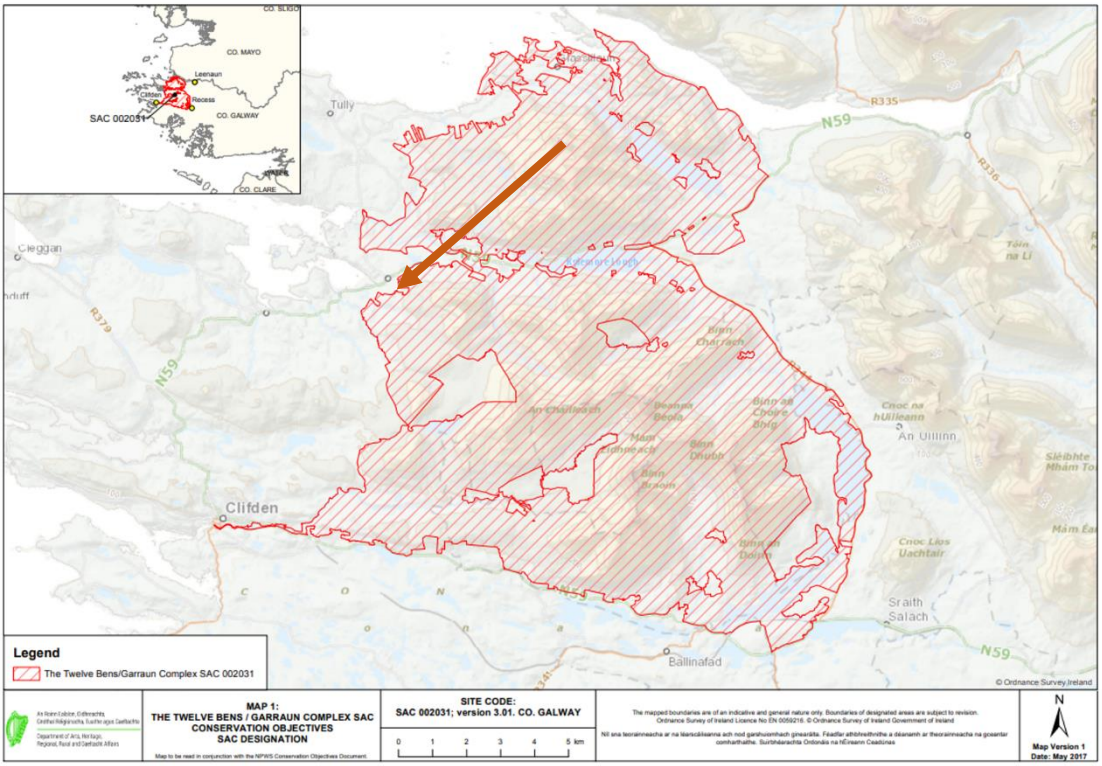


Figure 2. (below): Location of Natura 2000 network in relation to The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives. Version 1. (Red arrow indicates project location).

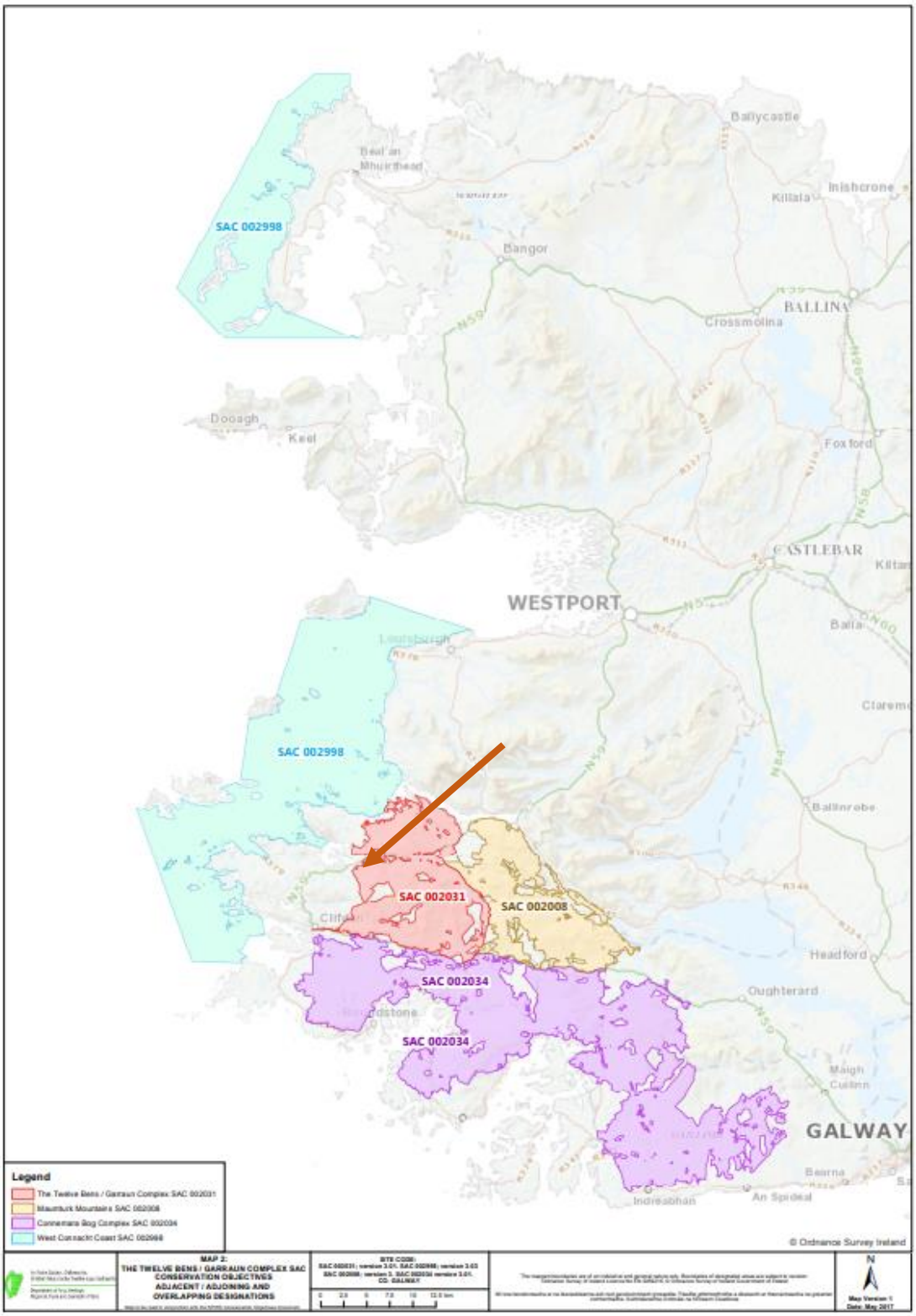


Figure 3. (below): Location of Woodland Habitat QIs in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives. Version 1. (Red arrow indicates project location).

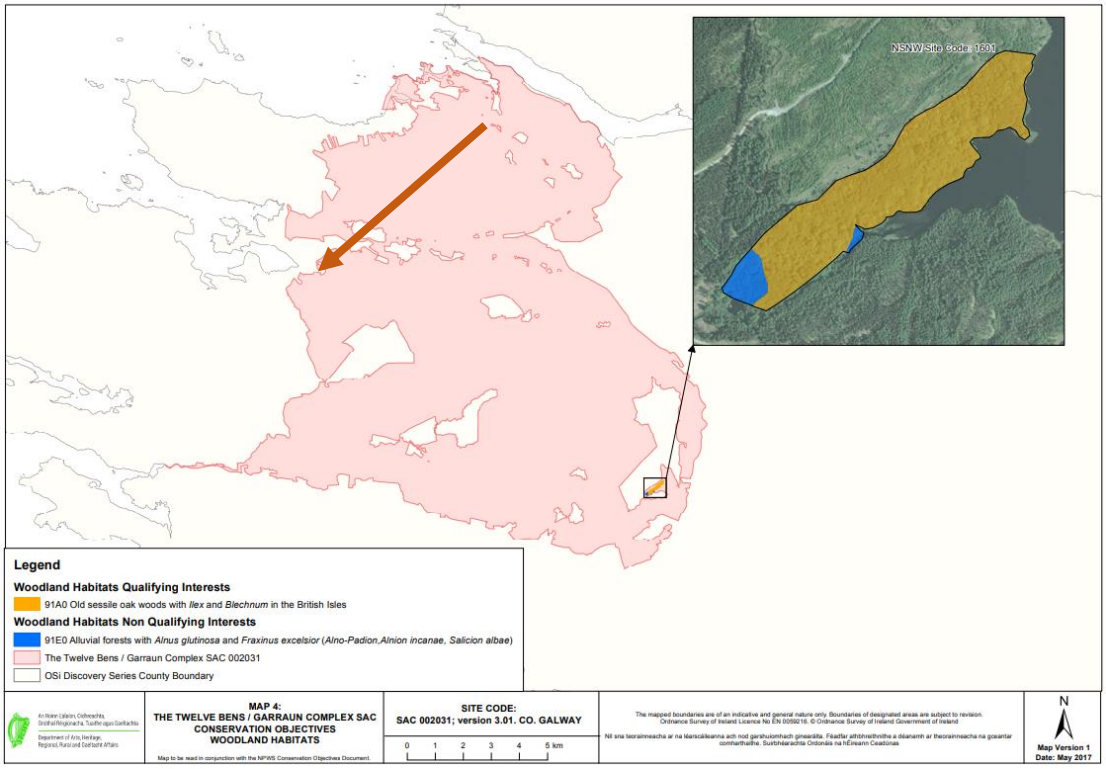


Figure 4. (below): Location of Margaritifera Sensitive Areas in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives. Version 1. (Red arrow indicates project location).

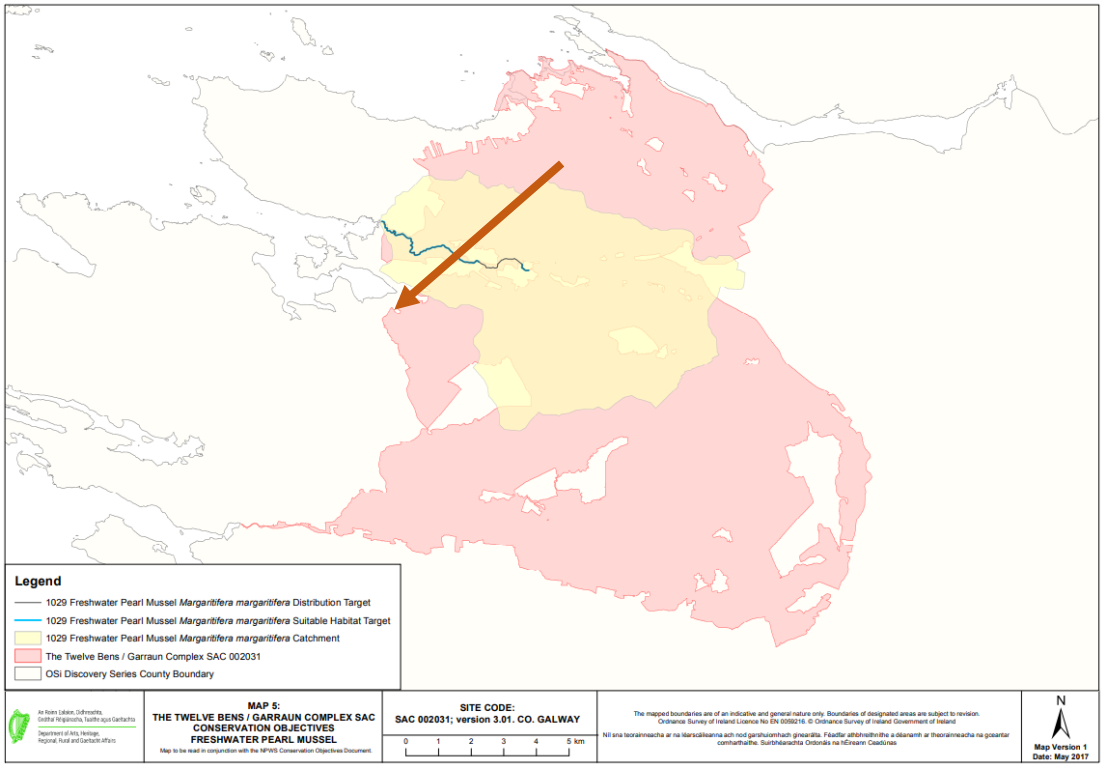
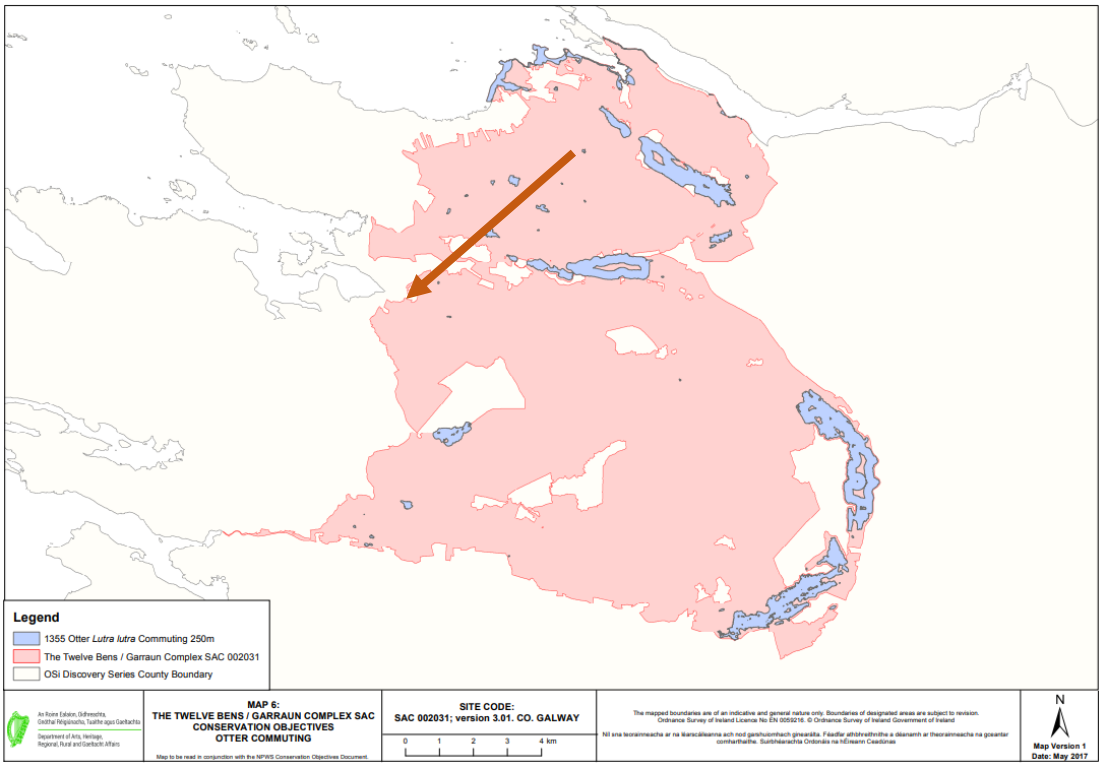


Figure 5. (below): Location of Otter commuting buffer zones in The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives. Version 1. (Red arrow indicates project location).



npws.ie

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland