Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of necessary conservation measures within Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Area of Conservation 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

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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 Regulations").[1]

On the 17th December 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 proposed sheep fencing within Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Area of Conservation [Site Code: 000534] and adjacent to Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Protection Area [Site Code: 004098]. Hereafter referred to as "the project".

The EAU have evaluated and analysed the information contained in the referred to above documents and location maps provided and carried out a determination. 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 the Conservation Objectives of European Sites.

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

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 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 conservation measures are 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 Screening for Appropriate Assessment 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);
- European Commission. (2001) 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. (2007) Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities;
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- European Commission. (2018) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;
- Office of the Planning Regulator. (2021) Practice Note PN01 - AA Screening for Development Management; and,
- Official Journal of the European Union. (2021) Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Volume 64; 2021/C 437/01).

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during December 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 or 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 18/12/2024

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 18/12/2024

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, 2011-2021 (S.I. 293 of 2021), the Ecological Assessment Unit is the competent authority in relation to screening for AA of projects and plans (such as the proposed conservation measures) which the Minister proposes to undertake or adopt.

4. Overview of the Project

The Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC and SPA designations overlap and encompass a large area of relatively intact blanket bog and mountains. The SAC incorporates the catchment of the Owenduff River and much of the Nephin Beg Mountain range, and is situated in Co. Mayo (Figure 1).

Within the site, the terrain varies enormously from the peaks of the Nephin Beg Mountains, which reach a maximum altitude of 717m, to areas where the land slopes westwards to the floodplain of the Owenduff River. The upper slopes of the mountains in the Owenduff/Nephin Complex carry wet heath and cliff vegetation, and patches of upland grassland are frequent. The presence of small corrie lakes and rock basin lakes adds to the habitat diversity of the mountains. Along its southern and eastern limits, the site is bounded by coniferous plantations and/or the high mountain slopes of the Nephin Begs.

The upper slopes of the mountains support wet heath, upland grassland and cliff vegetation. The lower mountain slopes are covered with blanket bog, with a broad representation of good quality bog habitats occurring. The Special Protection Area is of special conservation interest for Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] and Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] (Figure 2).

It is proposed to erect approximately 240m of sheep fencing on state owned lands along the perimeter of the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC at Dooghil, Tonragee, Co. Mayo within Wild Nephin National Park (Figure 3 and 4).

4.1. Purpose

The purpose of the fencing is to prevent the trespass of grazing sheep within the Wild Nephin National Park which is causing significant damage to the habitat by suppressing native vegetation. Livestock trespassing has contributed to overgrazing in the area and escaping livestock is also presenting a road safety issue on the N59. Furthermore, the removal of trespassing livestock and overgrazing will have positive effects on the QI habitats of the site, allowing for recovery of vegetation, recolonization of native flora and improved habitat condition. A reduction of grazing pressure and increasing habitat suitability for Golden Plover and prey species of Merlin in the SPA and adjacent areas.

4.2. Project Description

The proposed fencing will be approximately 240m long around lands at Dooghill and be adjacent to the N59 road. The control of sheep trespassing was reported as a principal management issue in the Conservation plan for Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC & SPA 2006-2011. The proposed fence line falls within the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC boundary, however it is currently a gravelled area, occasionally used by Mayo County Council for storing road materials.

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).

Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC [Site code: 000534].

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC 000534. Version 1. Accessed 19th December 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000534.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106]

~ Overall conservation status: Inadequate

Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355]

~ Overall conservation status: Favourable

Slender Green Feather-moss *Drepanocladus vernicosus* [1393]

~ Overall conservation status: Favourable

Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* [1528]

~ Overall conservation status: Favourable

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

~ Overall conservation status: Bad

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

~ Overall conservation status: Inadequate

Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]

~ Overall conservation status: Inadequate

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]

~ Overall conservation status: Inadequate

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]

~ Overall conservation status: Bad

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

~ Overall conservation status: Bad

Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]

~ Overall conservation status: Favourable

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

~ Overall conservation status: Bad

Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]

~ Overall conservation status: Bad

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

Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds in Owenduff/Nephin 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.
- Water quality: nutrients.
- Water quality: phytoplankton biomass.
- Water quality: phytoplankton composition.
- Water quality: attached algal biomass.
- Water quality: macrophyte status.
- Acidification status.
- Water colour.
- Dissolved organic carbon (DOC).
- Turbidity.
- Fringing habitat: area and condition.

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Hydrological regime: river flow.
- Hydrological regime: groundwater discharge.
- Substratum composition: particle size range.
- Water quality.
- Typical species.
- Floodplain connectivity: area.
- Fringing habitats: area and condition.

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicators species.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes.
- Vegetation composition: ericoid species and crowberry.
- Vegetation composition: dwarf shrub species.

- Vegetation composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: non-native species.
- Vegetation composition: native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation composition: bracken.
- Vegetation composition: soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: *Sphagnum* condition.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.
- Vegetation structure: burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Physical structure: drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alpine and Boreal heaths in Owenduff/Nephin 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.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicators species.
- Vegetation composition: dwarf shrub species.
- Vegetation composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: non-native species.
- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.

- Vegetation structure: burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Juniper population size.
- Vegetation composition: typical species.
- Vegetation of composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation structure: cone bearing plants.
- Vegetation structure: seedling recruitment.
- Vegetation structure: dead juniper.

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

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

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Ecosystem function: peat formation.
- Ecosystem function: hydrology.
- Community diversity.

- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes.
- Vegetation composition: potential dominant species.
- Vegetation composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: non-native species.
- Vegetation composition: native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: *Sphagnum* condition.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.
- Vegetation structure: burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Physical structure: drainage.
- Physical structure: erosion.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Transition mires and quaking bogs in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: number of positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: number of core positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: cover of positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: non-native species.

- Vegetation structure: height.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Physical structure: drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon in Owenduff/Nephin 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 Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Slender Green Feather-moss *Drepanocladus vernicosus* [1393]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Slender Green Feather-moss (Shining Sickle-moss) in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Population size.
- Area of suitable habitat.
- Hydrological conditions: water table level.
- Vegetation composition: tree cover.
- Vegetation composition: shrub cover.
- Vegetation composition: grass cover.
- Vegetation composition: bryophyte cover.
- Vegetation composition: cover of *Calliergonella cuspidate*.
- Vegetation structure: vegetation height.

Marsh Saxifrage *Saxifraga hirculus* [1528]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Marsh Saxifrage in Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Population size: number of rosettes.
- Population size: area of occupancy.
- Hydrological conditions: water level.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: negative indicator species.
- Vegetation structure: sward structure.
- Vegetation structure: grazing level.

Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA [Site code: 004098].

NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA [004098]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 19th December 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004098.pdf

Special Conservation Interests[4]

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) [A098]

- Article 12 Reporting for the period 2013-2018 indicate the long-term and short-term population trend directions (based on expert opinion and extrapolation of limited data respectively) are Uncertain.

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]

- Article 12 Reporting for the period 2013-2018 indicate the long-term and short-term population trend directions (based on complete survey/statistically robust estimates) are Stable.

Site Specific Conservation Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

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

Under Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive, DHLGH is required to ensure the favourable conservation status of all Annex I habitats and Annex II species within SACs.

The Conservation Objectives seek to maintain protected SAC feature(s) where evidence exists that it is in favourable condition in the site, or where there is uncertainty concerning the assessed condition of a feature but no reason to suspect deterioration in condition since designation.

Where evidence exists that a feature is declining and/or damaged and therefore not in a favourable condition in the site, the Conservation Objectives will seek to restore the protected feature.

The proposed fencing will help achieve the Conservation Objectives for the Owenduff/Nephin Comnplex SAC and adjacent SPA. This will be done by preventing overgrazing and allowing conditions for restoration and regeneration of native species.

[4] See online Article 12 web tool: https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/summary

Notably:

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010]

- Habitat area.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: cross leaved heath.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicators species.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes.
- Vegetation composition: ericoid species and crowberry.
- Vegetation composition: dwarf shrub species.
- Vegetation structure: *Sphagnum* condition.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

- Habitat area
- Community diversity
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicators species.
- Vegetation composition: dwarf shrub species.
- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.

***Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]**

- Juniper population size.
- Vegetation composition: typical species.

- Vegetation structure: cone bearing plants.
- Vegetation structure: seedling recruitment.

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes.
- Vegetation composition: potential dominant species.
- Vegetation structure: *Sphagnum* condition.
- Vegetation structure: signs of browsing.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- Physical structure: erosion.

Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]

- Habitat area.
- Community diversity.
- Vegetation composition: number of positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: number of core positive indicator species.
- Vegetation composition: cover of positive indicator species.
- Vegetation structure: height.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.

In the absence of the project, the Conservation Objectives for Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC would not be achieved as there would be continued overgrazing pressure and resulting impacts on vegetation composition and structure and habitat quality.

The project will be beneficial to maintaining and working towards achieving favourable conservation condition of the habitats in the site and the typical species of these protected habitat types.

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 SPA is 1.5km approximately east of the proposed sheep fence and will not result in any direct impacts on the Annex II bird species for which the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA is designated, namely Merlin and Golden plover. The proposed works will occur outside of the breeding season for both species. There are no historic records of merlin and/or Golden plover breeding in the vicinity of the proposed works.

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. The effect on all QI and SCI features of the SAC & SPA have been considered.

There is not considered to be any potential for disturbance beyond a *de minimus* level on the SCI bird populations for which the adjacent Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA is designated.

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.

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.

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:

_____

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.

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: 30th December 2024

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the activity, the EAU determines[5], in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011 Regulations, that the proposed fencing within the Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Area of Conservation and Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Protection Area is entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Conservation Objectives of these European sites.

It can be concluded with certainty that the project is a necessary conservation measure that is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the sites.

[5] Ryan Wilson-Parr (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 30th December 2024.

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC as per the NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC 000534. Version 1. Location of proposed fencing is shown by the red arrow.

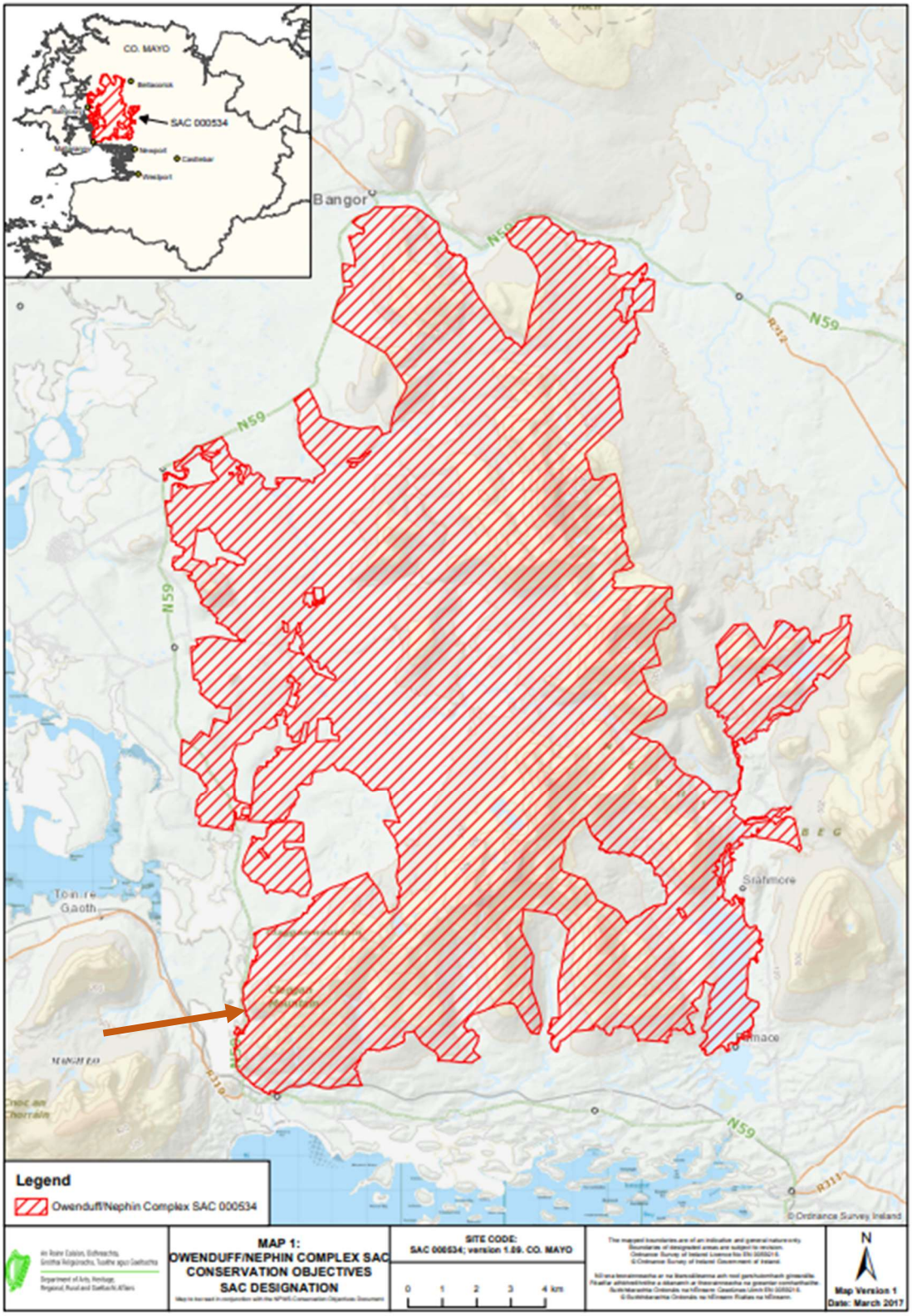


Figure 2. (below): Location of Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA as per the European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds (Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Protection Area 004098)) Regulations 2012. (S.I. No. 586/2019) as shown in NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC 000534. Version 1. Location of proposed fencing is shown by the red arrow.

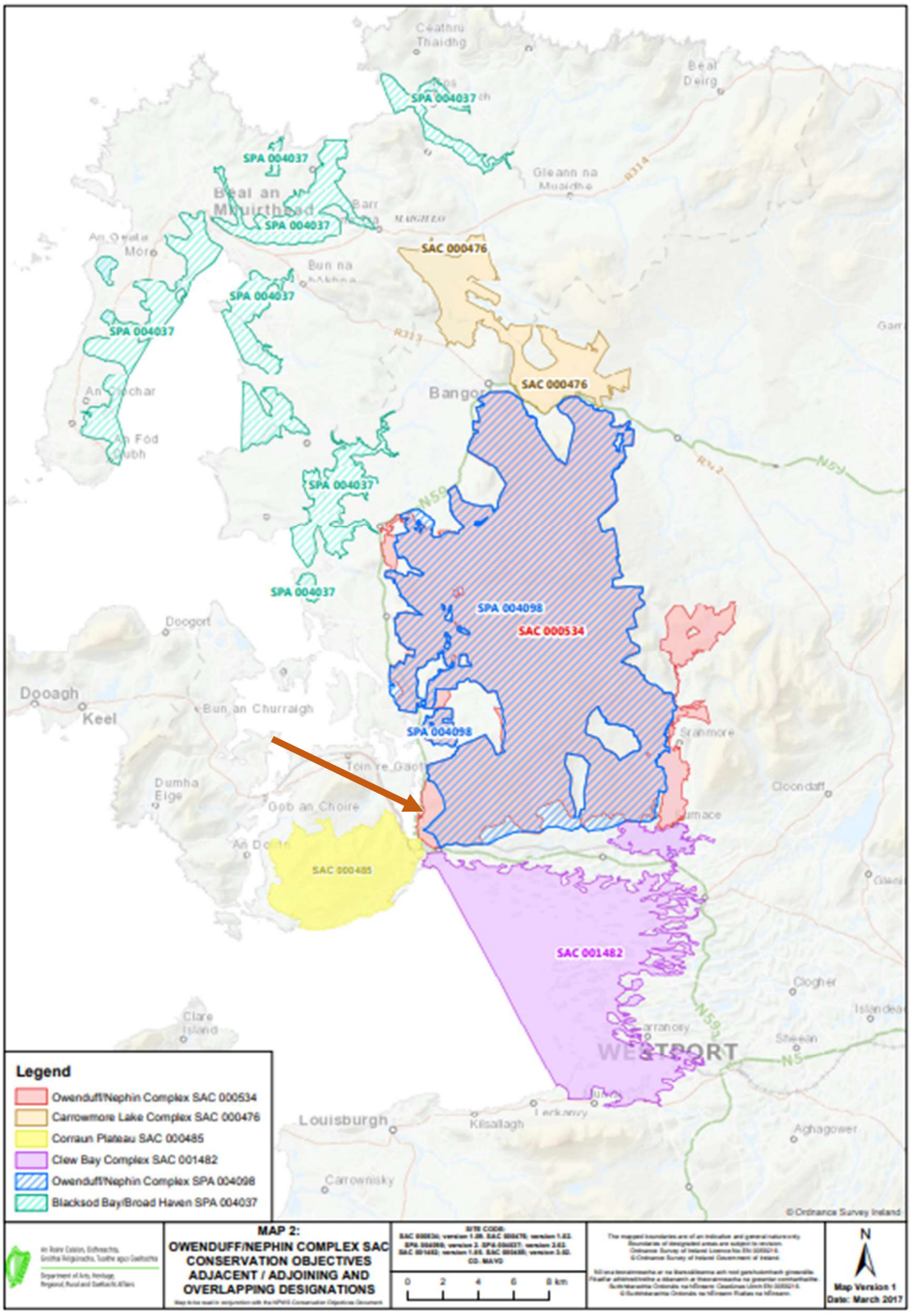


Figure 3. (below): NPWS Map Viewer showing Ordnance Survey Ireland Discovery basemap and the location of proposed sheep fencing (red line) along the perimeter of the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC.

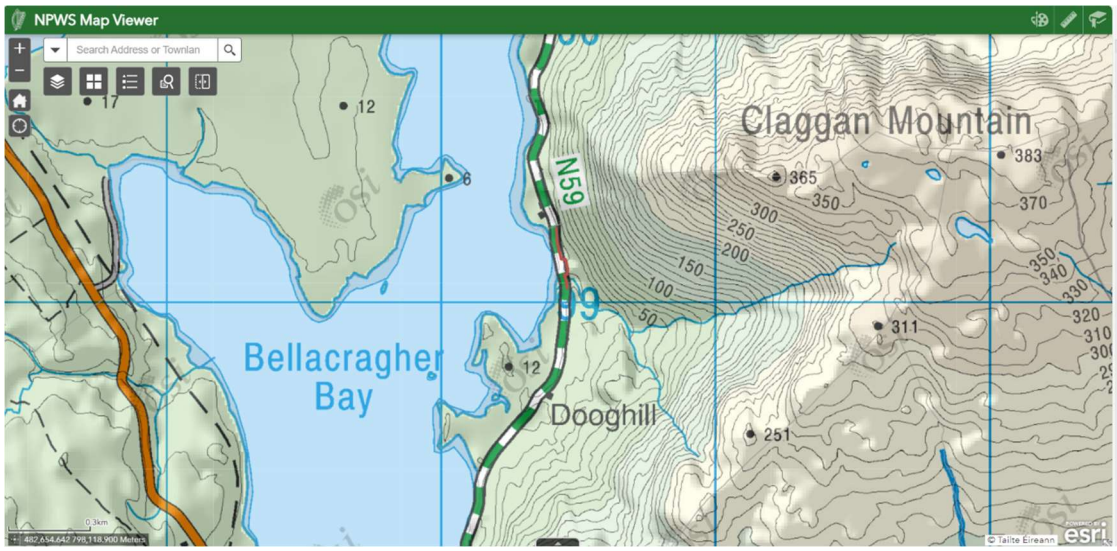
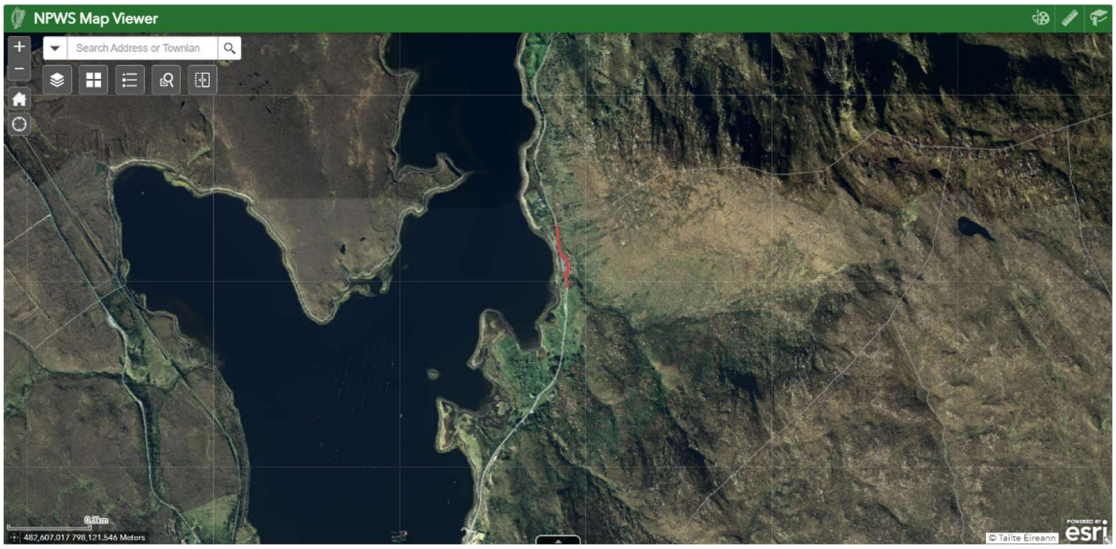


Figure 4. (below): NPWS Map Viewer showing Ordnance Survey Ireland orthophotography basemap and the location of proposed sheep fencing (red line) along the perimeter of the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC.



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