Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Determination on signage installation within River Barrow & Nore SAC and Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC & SPA 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 11th March 2026, 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 installation of signage within River Barrow & Nore Special Area of Conservation [Site Code: 002162] and Tramore Dunes and Backstrand Special Area of Conservation [Site Code: 000671] & Special Protection Area [Site Code: 004027]. 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 information and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites. This determination does not constitute consent or authorisation for the proposed works. The proponent is responsible for ensuring that all other necessary consents, licences, or permissions are obtained, including, where relevant, a declaration under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

[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 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

- European Commission. (2000) Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle;
- 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. (2001) Sustainable tourism and Natura 2000 – Guidelines, initiatives and good practices in Europe;
- 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 May 2026 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 18/05/2026

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 18/05/2026

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 River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Figure 1) consists of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow and Nore River catchments as far upstream as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, and it also includes the tidal elements and estuary as far downstream as Creadun Head in Waterford. Overall, the site is of considerable conservation significance for the occurrence of good examples of habitats and of populations of plant and animal species that are listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Furthermore it is of high conservation value for the populations of bird species that use it. The occurrence of several Red Data Book plant species including three rare plants in the salt meadows add further interest to this site.

Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC (Figure 2) is a composite coastal site which lies at the head of Tramore Bay, east of Tramore town in Co. Waterford. The Tramore dunes (Burrow) are the result of a classic inshore process - the growth of a spit of shingle and sand across a shallow bay. Behind the spit lies the Back Strand which dries out at low tide and is connected to the open sea by narrows at Rinneshark. The Burrow has a narrow neck and expands eastwards. Longshore drift is from the west so any loose material accumulates at the tip, which is hooked, and on the opposing spit at Bass Point. Tramore Dunes and Back Strand is a site of major ecological importance for the range of good quality coastal habitats which occur, including fixed dunes, which are listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site has a remarkably rich flora, featuring a number of rare and protected species, and the intertidal area is important for wintering waterfowl.

Tramore Back Strand SPA (Figure 3) comprises a medium-sized estuary sheltered from the open sea by a long shingle spit, with high dunes. The area known as the Back Strand empties almost completely at low tide; it is connected to the outer bay and sea by narrows at Rinnashark. Tramore Back Strand SPA is of high ornithological importance for wintering waterfowl, with one species occurring in internationally important numbers and a further seven species having populations of national importance. The regular occurrence of Little Egret, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit is of particular note as these three species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Tramore Back Strand is also a Ramsar Convention site.

The project proposes to install signage at two locations, one within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC and another within the Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC and Tramore Back Strand SPA, which are regularly used for recreational purposes, thereby providing information on the importance of these site designations and the duty of care towards the site that visitors are responsible for.

4.1. Purpose

The proposed installation of informative signage within these European Sites is intended to promote awareness around the importance of habitats and species for which these sites have been designated. The signs will advise on the responsible use of these sites for recreational activities within the SAC, where impacts of damage and/or disturbance from outdoor sports, leisure and recreational activities are frequently recorded.

The signs will provide clear, locally relevant information on:

- Protected habitats & species
- Statutory obligations for conservation
- Conservation measures
- Public awareness & stewardship enhancement.
- Pressures identified at each sign location, (as each area is under pressure from different threats) including: Visitor pressure (vandalism, littering, starting fires), disturbance for ground nesting birds & Waterfowl, trampling vegetation, and uncontrolled dog access.

5. Project Description

The proposed project involves the installation of informative signage within the SACs and SPA at clearly visible locations within high footfall areas, as there currently is none. Signs will be made of high pressure laminated prints and attached to aluminum stakes. Signs will be approximately A0 (1189mm x 841mm) in size.

Both sign locations (Figure 4) are within a car park of each beach, therefore, there is little or no impact to any QI's of the sites. No machinery will be entering any qualifying interest habitat. The minimum amount of soil/substrate disturbance necessary will be undertaken. Access will be by means of existing roads or on foot. Works are anticipated to be carried out over a number of days within a short period (intended to be no more than a week in duration).

Sign specification is outlined below:

<u>High Pressure Laminated Prints</u>

HPL (high pressure laminated) is a 100% fully recyclable product especially suited for exterior architectural heritage interpretative panels or way finding markers and, with environmental accreditations, it scores significantly over ACM products.

Utilising a high-pressure lamination process and thermo-hardening resin to provide outstanding full-colour print quality and long-term resistance to UV and exterior weather conditions.

The customised print image is set within the thermo-hardened resin of the HPL panel preventing the further application of paint or a ‘new customisation’. High pressure laminate interpretive panels can be supplied printed both sides and are graffiti resistant enabling cleansing of the custom surface with many products such as water, white spirits, alcohol or acetone.

6. 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).

River Barrow and River Nore SAC [Site Code: 002162]

NPWS (2011) Conservation objectives for River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162]. Site-Specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 18th May 2026.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002162.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Estuaries [1130]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Reefs [1170]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Favourable**

Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

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

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

European dry heaths [4030]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*) [7220]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

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

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Favourable**

Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Unknown**

Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Favourable**

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Favourable**

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests

Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* [1016]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Desmoulin's whorl snail in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution: occupied site
- Population size: adults
- Population density
- Area of occupancy
- Habitat quality: vegetation
- Habitat quality: soil moisture levels
- Juvenile density in fine sediment
- Extent and distribution of spawning habitat
- Availability of juvenile habitat

Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029]

The status of the freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) as a qualifying Annex II species for the River Barrow and River Nore SAC is currently under review. The outcome of this review will determine whether a site-specific conservation objective is set for this species.

White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* [1092]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of White-clawed crayfish in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution
- Population structure: recruitment
- Negative indicator species
- Disease
- Water quality
- Habitat quality: heterogeneity

Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* [1095]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Sea lamprey in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy
- Population structure of juveniles
- Juvenile density in fine sediment
- Extent and distribution of spawning habitat
- Availability of juvenile habitat

Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* [1096]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Brook lamprey in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution
- Population structure of juveniles
- Juvenile density on fine sediment
- Extent and distribution of spawning habitat

- Availability of juvenile habitat

River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* [1099]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of River lamprey in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy
- Population structure of juveniles
- Juvenile density in fine sediment
- Extent and distribution of spawning habitat
- Availability of juvenile habitat

Twaite shad *Alosa fallax* [1103]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Twaite shad in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy
- Population structure: age classes
- Extent and distribution of spawning habitat
- Water quality: oxygen levels
- Spawning habitat quality: Filamentous algae; macrophytes; sediment

Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) (only in fresh water) [1106]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Salmon in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution: extent of anadromy
- Adult spawning fish

- Salmon fry abundance
- Out-mitrating smolt abundance
- Number and distribution of redds
- Water quality

Estuaries [1130]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Community distribution
- Community extent

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Community distribution

***Salicornia* and other annuals colonizing mud and sand [1310]**

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply; flooding regime; creeks and pans
- Vegetation structure: zonation; vegetation height; vegetation cover; negative indicator species: *Spartina anglica*

- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities

Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply: flooding regime; creeks and pans
- Vegetation structure: zonation; vegetation height; vegetation cover.
- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities; negative indicator species: *Spartina anglica*

Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution
- Extent of terrestrial habitat
- Extent of marine habitat
- Extent of freshwater (river) habitat
- Extent of freshwater (lake) habitat
- Couching sites and holts
- Fish biomass available

Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply; flooding regime; creeks and pans
- Vegetation structure: zonation; vegetation height, vegetation cover, negative indicator species: Spartina anglica
- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities

Killarney fern *Trichomanes speciosum* [1421]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Killarney Fern in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution
- Population size
- Population structure: juvenile fronds
- Habitat extent
- Hydrological conditions: visible water; humidity
- Light levels: shading
- Invasive species

Nore freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera durrovensis* [1990]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of the Nore freshwater pearl mussel in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Distribution
- Population size: adult mussels
- Population structure: recruitment; adult mortality
- Habitat extent
- Water quality: Macroinvertebrate and phytobenthos (diatoms)

- Substratum quality: Filamentous algae (macroalgae), macrophytes (rooted higher plants)
- Substratum quality: sediment; oxygen availability
- Hydrological regime: flow variability
- Host fish

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 the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat distribution
- Habitat area
- Hydrological regime: river flow
- Hydrological regime: groundwater discharge
- Substratum composition: particle size range
- Water chemistry: minerals
- Water quality: suspended sediment; nutrients
- Vegetation composition: typical species
- Floodplain connectivity

European dry heaths [4030]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat distribution
- Habitat area
- Physical structure: free-draining, acid, low nutrient soil: rock outcrops

- Vegetation structure: sub-shrub indicator species; senescent gorse, browsing; native trees and shrubs; positive indicator species; weedy negative indicator species; disturbed bare ground; burning
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; bryophyte and non-crustose lichen species; bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*); non-native species; rare/scarce heath species

Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat distribution
- Habitat area
- Hydrological regime: Flooding depth/ height of water table
- Vegetation structure: sward height
- Vegetation composition: Broadleaf herb: grass ratio; typical species; negative indicator species

Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Hydrological regime: height of water table; water flow
- Water quality
- Vegetation composition: typical species

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

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old oak woodland with Ilex and Blechnum in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- 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: native tree cover; typical species; negative indicator species

Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Woodland size
- Woodland structure: cover and height; community diversity and extent
- Woodland structure: natural regeneration
- Hydrological regime: Flooding depth/height of water table
- Woodland structure: dead wood; veteran trees; indicators of local distinctiveness
- Vegetation composition: native tree cover; typical species; negative indicator species

Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC [Site Code: 000671]

NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives for Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC [000671]. Site-Specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 18th May 2026.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000671.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Favourable**

Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Inadequate**

Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]

~ Overall assessment of Conservation Status: **Bad**

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Community extent
- Community structure: Zostera density
- Community distribution.

Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of drift lines in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply
- Vegetation structure: zonation
- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities, negative indicator species

Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply
- Vegetation structure: zonation

- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities, negative indicator species.

Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply, creeks and pans, flooding regime
- Vegetation structure: zonation, vegetation height, vegetation cover.
- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities.
- Vegetation structure: negative indicator species - Spartina anglica.

Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (GlaucoPuccinellietalia maritimae) in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply, creeks and pans, flooding regime
- Vegetation structure: zonation, vegetation height, vegetation cover.
- Vegetation composition: typical species and subcommunities.
- Vegetation structure: negative indicator species - Spartina anglica.

Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: sediment supply, creeks and pans, flooding regime
- Vegetation structure: zonation, vegetation height, vegetation cover.
- Vegetation composition: typical species and subcommunities.
- Vegetation structure: negative indicator species - Spartina anglica.

Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply
- Vegetation structure: zonation
- Vegetation composition: plant health of fore-dune grasses, typical species and sub-communities, negative indicator species

Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria ('white dunes') in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area

- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply
- Vegetation structure: zonation
- Vegetation composition: plant health of fore-dune grasses, typical species and sub-communities, negative indicator species

Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes') in Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Habitat area
- Habitat distribution
- Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply
- Vegetation structure: zonation, bare ground, sward height
- Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities, negative indicator species (including Hippophae rhamnoides), scrub/trees.

Tramore Back Strand SPA [Site Code: 004027]

NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives for Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC [000671]. Site-Specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 18th May 2026.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004027.pdf

Special Conservation Interests

Brent Goose Branta bernicla hrota [A046]

Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria [A140]

Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola [A141]

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus [A142]

Dunlin Calidris alpina alpine [A149]

Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa [A156]

Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica [A157]

Curlew Numenius arquata [A160]

Wetlands [A999]

Conservation Objectives for Special Conservation Interests

Brent Goose Branta bernicla hrota [A046]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Light-bellied Brent Goose in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria [A140]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola [A141]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Plover in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus [A142]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lapwing in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Dunlin Calidris alpina alpine [A149]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunlin in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa [A156]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black-tailed Godwit in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica [A157]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar-tailed Godwit in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Curlew Numenius arquata [A160]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew in Tramore Back Strand SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

- Population trend
- Distribution

Wetlands [A999]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetland habitat in Tramore Back Strand SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it. This is defined by the following attribute and target:

- Habitat area

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.

Article 6(2) makes provision for avoidance of habitat deterioration and significant species disturbance. Its emphasis is therefore preventive. Article 6(2) obliges Member States to avoid "*the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of this Directive*" in Natura 2000 sites.

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 informative signage is intended to prevent and act as a deterrent of harmful activities including pollution and habitat and species

disturbance within the SACs and SPA with the aim of protecting and improving the conditions of the Qualifying Interests of these sites, notably;

- **To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetland habitat in Tramore Back Strand SPA, and;**
- **To maintain the favourable conservation condition of species utilising these sites.**

and to:

- **To maintain the favourable conservation condition of habitats which are designated as Qualifying Interests for the Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC.**

The installation of signage as outlined above is a practical, low-impact conservation measure that directly supports NPWS obligations under EU and National legislation. By improving public understanding of designated coastal sites in Waterford, the proposed signage will contribute to the long-term protection of habitats and species, while supporting sustainable public access.

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 all QI/SCI features of the SAC and SPA have been considered. The erection of informative signage will raise awareness to the importance of the site and the risks resulting from the damaging activities currently occurring. The signage is intended to prevent and deter future damaging activities on the site.

No likely significant effects anticipated on the QI features of any SAC/SPA.

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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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. ☐

Prepared by: Darren Ellis, Ecologist, Ecological Assessment Unit

Signed:

Date: 18th May 2026.

11. Part 6: Determination

Following an analysis of the activity, the EAU determines, in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011 Regulations, that the proposed installation of informative signage at River Barrow & Nore Special Area of Conservation and Tramore Dunes and Backstrand Special Area of Conservation & Special Protection Area is entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Conservation Objectives of the European site.

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 site.

Determined by: Laura Connolly, Ecologist

Signed:

Date: 18th May 2026

12. Supplementary Information

Figure 1 (below): Location of River Barrow and River Nore SAC as per NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 2. (Yellow arrow is indicative of project location).

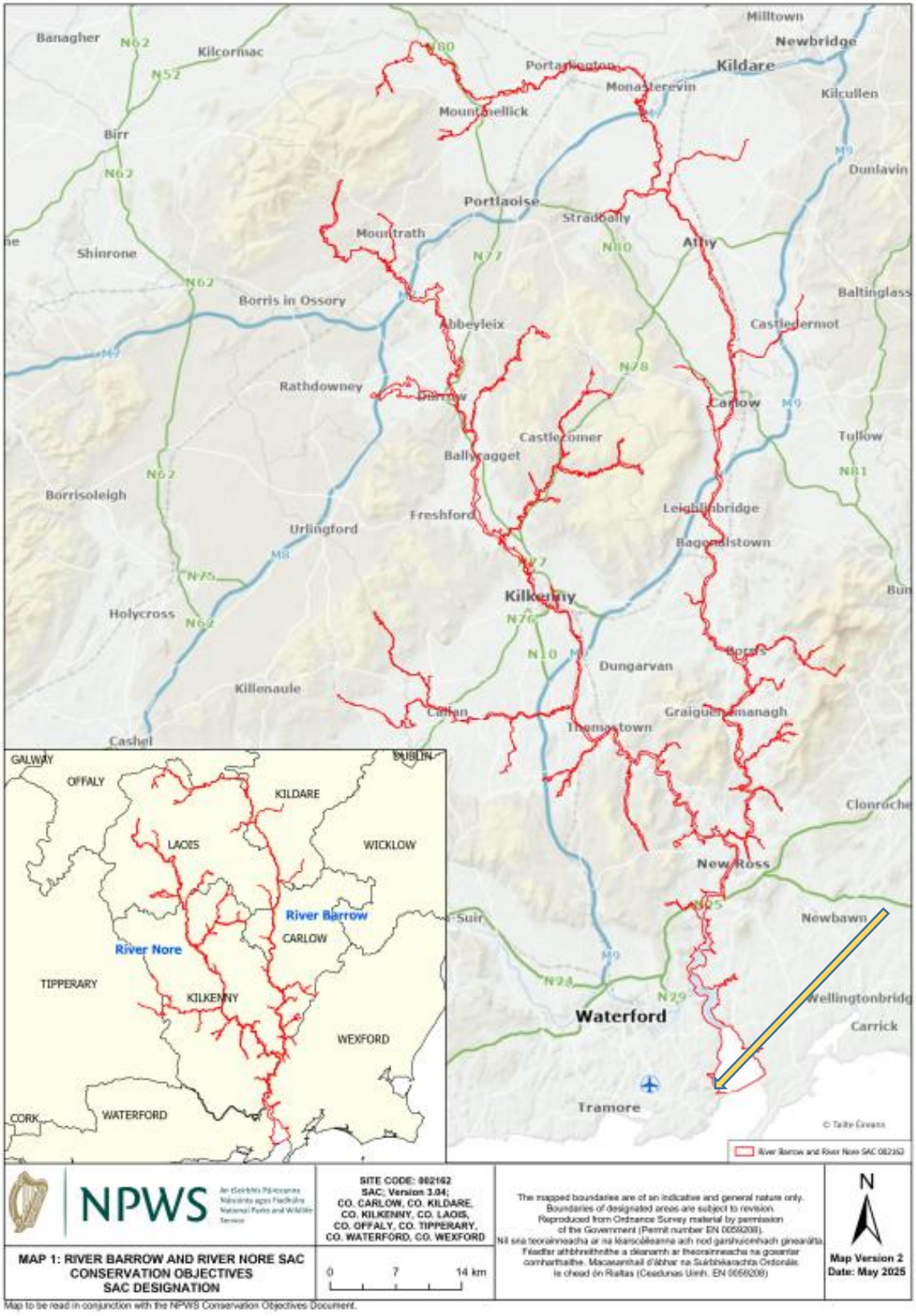


Figure 2. (below): Location of Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC as per NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC 000671. Version 1.

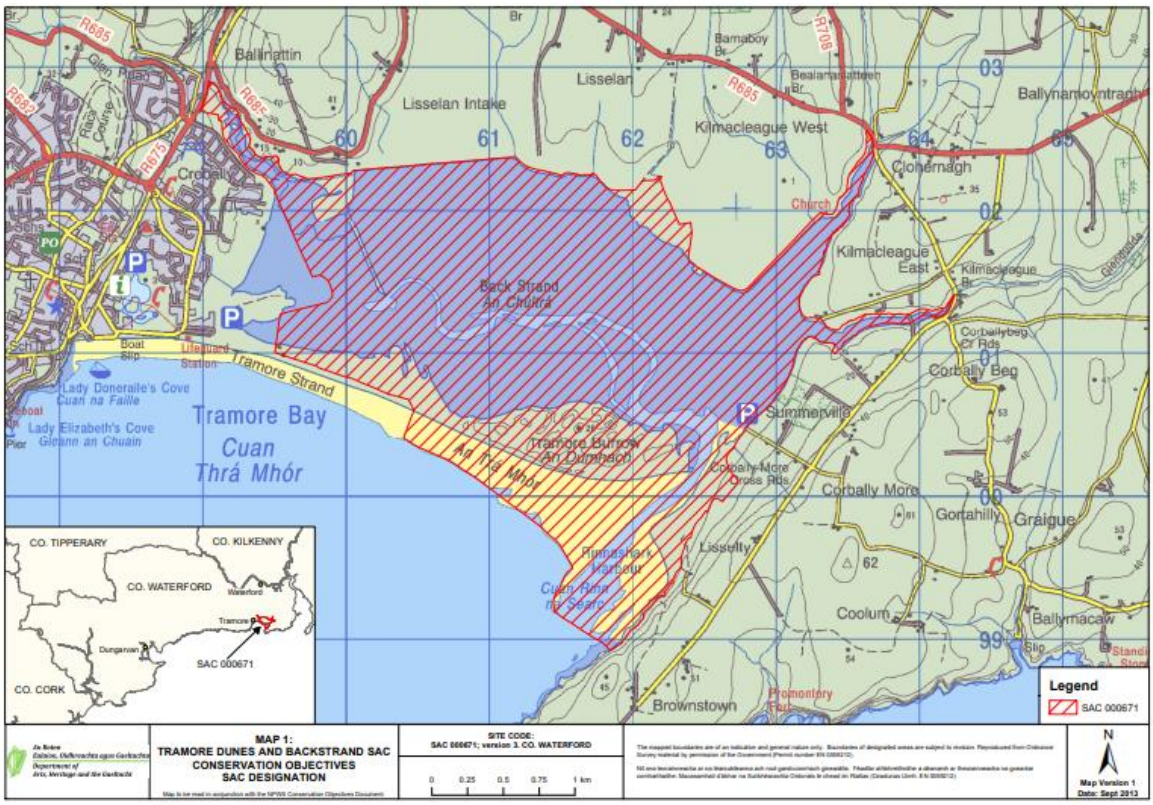


Figure 3. (below): Location of Tramore Back Strand SPA as per NPWS (2013) Conservation Objectives: Tramore Back Strand SPA 004027. Version 1.

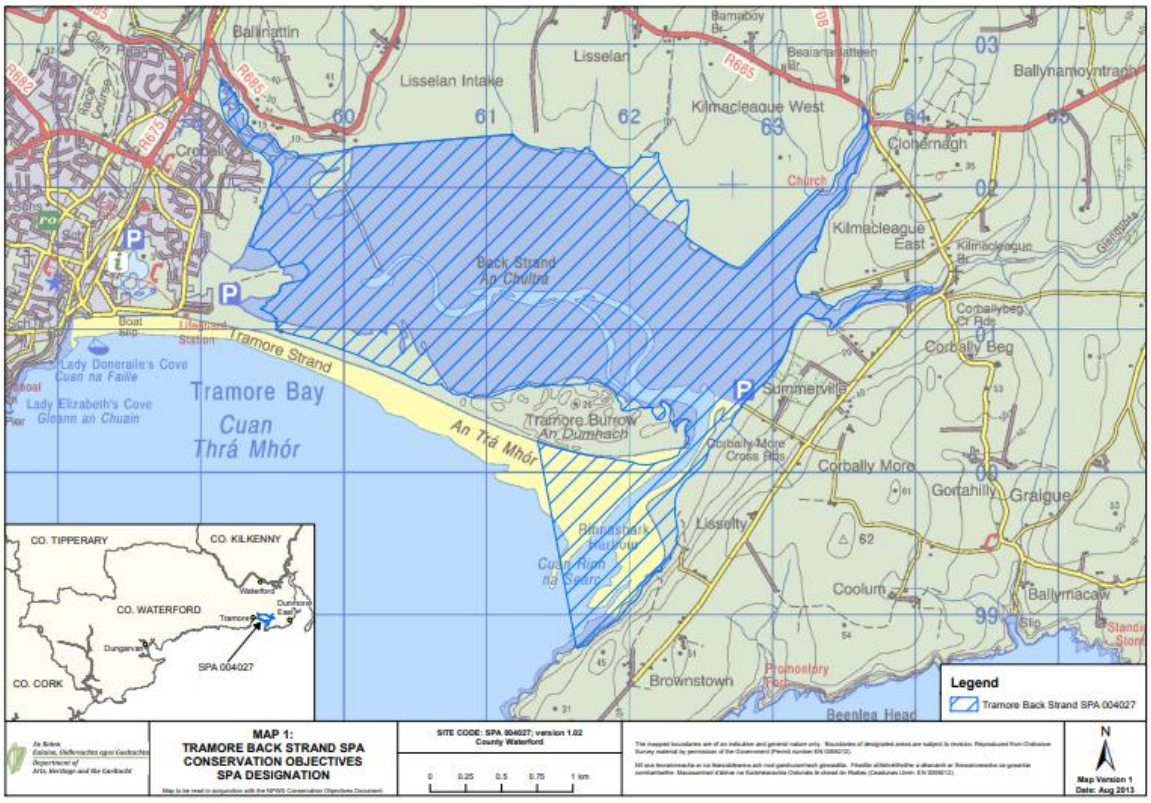
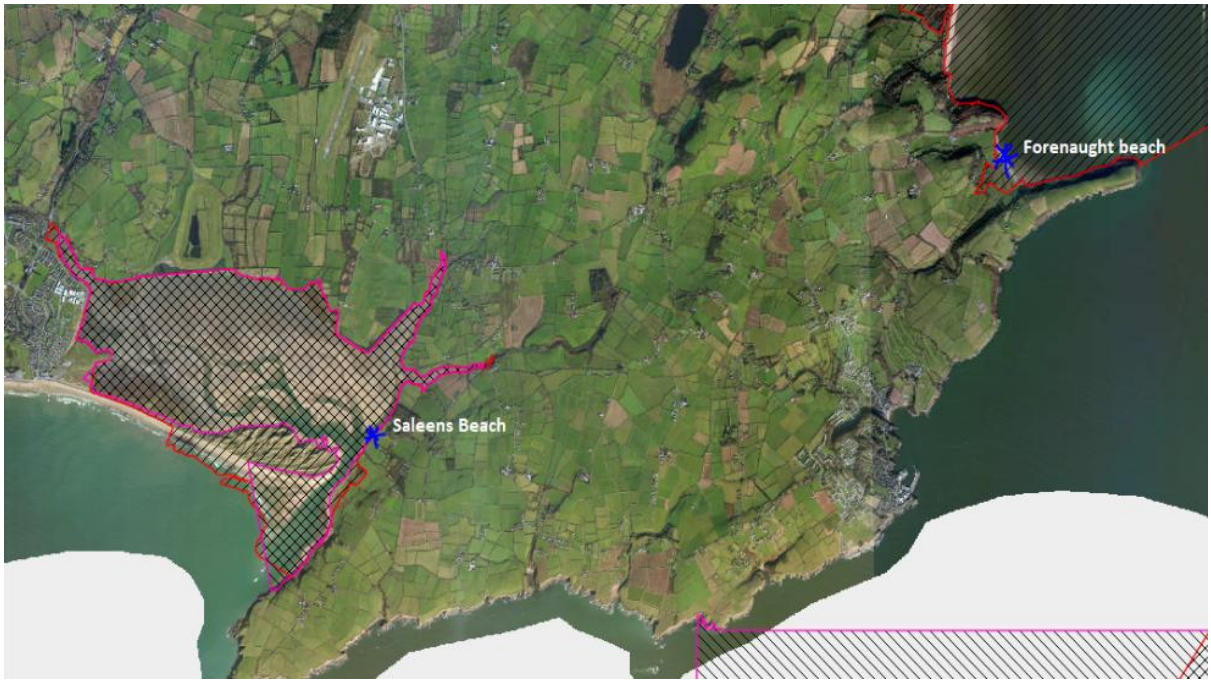


Figure 4 (below) Site specific sign locations, within River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Right), Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC and Tramore Back Strand SPA (Left).



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