Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of Peatland Restoration measures within the Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation in County Galway 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 1st July 2025, 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 peatland restoration measures within the Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC [Site code: 002031], Co. Galway. The EAU have been provided with a detailed Restoration Action Plan for the site.

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 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;
- 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); and,
- Peatland ACTION – Technical Compendium. Peatland ACTION sharing good practice for peatland restoration techniques. NatureScot (2022).

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during August 2025 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 14/08/2025

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 14/08/2025

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

This plan proposes the restoration of 384ha of blanket bog and associated peatland habitats by the implementation of drain blocking, erosion control, hag and turf bank re-profiling in the townland of Lecknavarna, Co. Galway in the Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC (Site code: 002031)(Figure 1). The site is dominated by lowland blanket bog extending up into upland blanket bog, wet heath and a mosaic of siliceous scree slopes and dry acidic grassland.

The nature of this proposal is in conjunction with the commonage's shareholders, the Dulra Natura Community group and the LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature project. The LIFE IP Wild Atlantic Nature is a nine year EU funded project running from 2021 to 2029 and is coordinated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. The project aims to help improve Ireland's performance in conserving habitats, in particular, to improve the conservation status of blanket bog and associated peatlands in the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) network.

4.1. Purpose

On the lower slopes the blanket bog habitat has been adversely affected by anthropogenic pressures and there is evidence of cutover peat, with bare turf banks to the east and extensive areas of eroding bare peat to the centre and western boundary of the site. Furthermore, an extensive network of artificial drains are compromising the site's hydrological integrity. This project proposes to implement a Restoration Action Plan (RAP), which addresses the restoration of artificial, bare peat and eroding turf banks. Dense patches of *Rhododendron ponticum* are present on the site; this element of the plan is currently being addressed by the Dulra Natura community group as part of a separate funded works package.

5. Project Description

The main restoration measures include revegetation of 1.25ha of exposed peat through the implementation of laying geotextile and coir logs and erecting a temporary fence to create a 1ha exclusion zone; 22km of drain blocking, this will be a combination of peat dams, timber dams, stone dams and zipping/wave dams; and 1.36km re-profiling of redundant but exposed turf banks. The re-profiling of the old turf banks and drain blocking will be carried out using an experienced operator on a tracked digger. The proposed measures are likely to be implemented in a phased approach with work beginning autumn 2025. Due to the sensitivity of the site a site foreman will make regular visits to ensure the implementation process is not adversely affecting any of the habitats present. The geotextile and coir logs are likely to be transported onto the site by helicopter and/or quad bike and trailer. The construction of timber dams, laying and pegging of geotextile matting and placement of coir logs will be carried out by hand. Only actively eroding banks and bare peat are targeted for restoration interventions, including reprofiling and the application of

geotextile matting and coir logs. A 1 ha (100 x 100 m) fenced livestock exclusion area is proposed for an area of bare peat to facilitate revegetation and stabilisation.

The site contains 30.21 km of artificial drains, forming an extensive, inter-connected network that is transporting water from the centre of the bog towards the east and north-east. It is recommended to block 22.3 km of active drains and grips. Reprofiling of turf banks is required where vertical bare peat is exposed and actively eroding. Reprofiling will reduce carbon loss to downstream watercourses and improve the hydrological integrity of the site.

The site has been broken into four management parcels (Figure 2). A breakdown of the actions proposed for each parcel are as follows:

- **Erosion control**: The site contains 11.76 ha of actively eroding bare peat, primarily affecting the steeper slopes within the upper catchment of parcel CRE-4 and the spur in CRE-2. In CRE-2, a gully forming on the spur should be controlled with the use of coir logs (~20) where there is underlying peat; and stone dams (~6) where the gully has eroded down to the mineral layer. The coir logs and stone dams will reduce the water flow, allowing water to be retained and promote vegetation growth. The site contains 4.91 km of eroding hags in CRE-2 and CRE-4, these should be covered with geotextile matting (900g/m2 2m x 25m). The geotextile will reduce erosion and increase peat stability, promoting vegetation growth. A 1 ha (100 x 100 m) livestock exclusion zone is proposed for the CRE-2 eroding spur to facilitate peat stability and promote vegetation growth. This temporary exclusion zone will also help demonstrate how resting areas of eroded peat can revegetate naturally if grazing pressure is reduced. It will also offer the project the opportunity to demonstrate the difference between geotextile and natural revegetation; as well as trialling temporary fencing as a suitable measure for bare ground, it would considered a lower cost restoration measure compared to geotextile, and fencing materials are more readily available to farmers and landowners planning restoration measures involving revegetation.
- **Drain blocking**: The site contains 30.21 km of artificial drains, forming an extensive, inter-connected network that is transporting water from the centre of the bog towards the east and north-east. It is recommended to block 22.3 km of active drains and grips, which are primarily found in parcels CRE-1, CRE-2 and CRE-3, with two small drains in CRE-4. The majority of these drains should be blocked by peat dams (~4,737), while timber dams (~434) are recommended for drains with fast flow and/or steep slopes (> 12 degrees). Drains should be blocked in a downstream direction and spaced according to slope. It has been proposed to trial the zipping technique on an area in CRE-1 where a system of narrow functional drains have been identified close to the southern boundary of this parcel. This technique is popular in Scotland and the UK as it is quick to implement and is a cost effective method of drain blocking, as per the Peatland

Technical Compendium it will be used in combination with peat dams (wave dams).

- **ReProfiling**: Parcel CRE-1 contains a network of turf banks of which 1.36km have been assessed as eroding. Reprofiling of turf banks is required where vertical bare peat is exposed and actively eroding. Reprofiling will reduce carbon loss to downstream watercourses and improve the hydrological integrity of the site.

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).

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

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC 002031. Version 1. Accessed 14th July 2025.

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

Qualifying Interests

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

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

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

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

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

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

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

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

Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]

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

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

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

Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]

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

Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]

- 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**

Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029]

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

Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106]

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

Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355]

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

Slender Naiad *Najas flexilis* [1833]

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

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 fluctuations.
- 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.
- Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes, negative indicator species, non-native species, positive indicator species, grass species and dwarf shrubs, bracken, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: grazing and browsing.
- 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.
- 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: native tree cover, 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).
- Substratum quality: 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 (river) 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.

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 proposed restoration measures are in line with the conservation objective listed in the Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex SAC (002031) - To restore the favourable conservation condition of blanket bogs in The Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex SAC.

In the absence of the project, the Conservation Objectives for Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex Special Areas of Conservation, as outlined above, would not be achieved, as there would be continued risks of bare peat, erosion and artificial drainage.

The Restoration Action Plan for Creagha Commonage, Lecknavarna will directly contribute to the delivery of Site Specific Conservation Objectives, notably:

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

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 Restoration Action Plan for Creagha Commonage, Lecknavarna, is a conservation measures necessary for the management of the Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex Special Areas of Conservation.

The RAP has identified and considered the potential for temporary increased sedimentation and nutrient runoff during restoration 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.

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.

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. ☐

Signature: Ryan Wilson Parr, Ecological Assessment Unit

Date: 19th August 2025

11. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the activity, the EAU determines[4], in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011 Regulations, that the peatland restoration measures within Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation [Site code: 002031] are entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Conservation Objectives of this 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.

[4] Ryan Wilson Parr (Ecological Assessment Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 19th August 2025.

12. Supplementary Information

Figure 1 (below). The Twelve Bens/ Garraun Complex SAC as per the NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC 002031. Version 1.

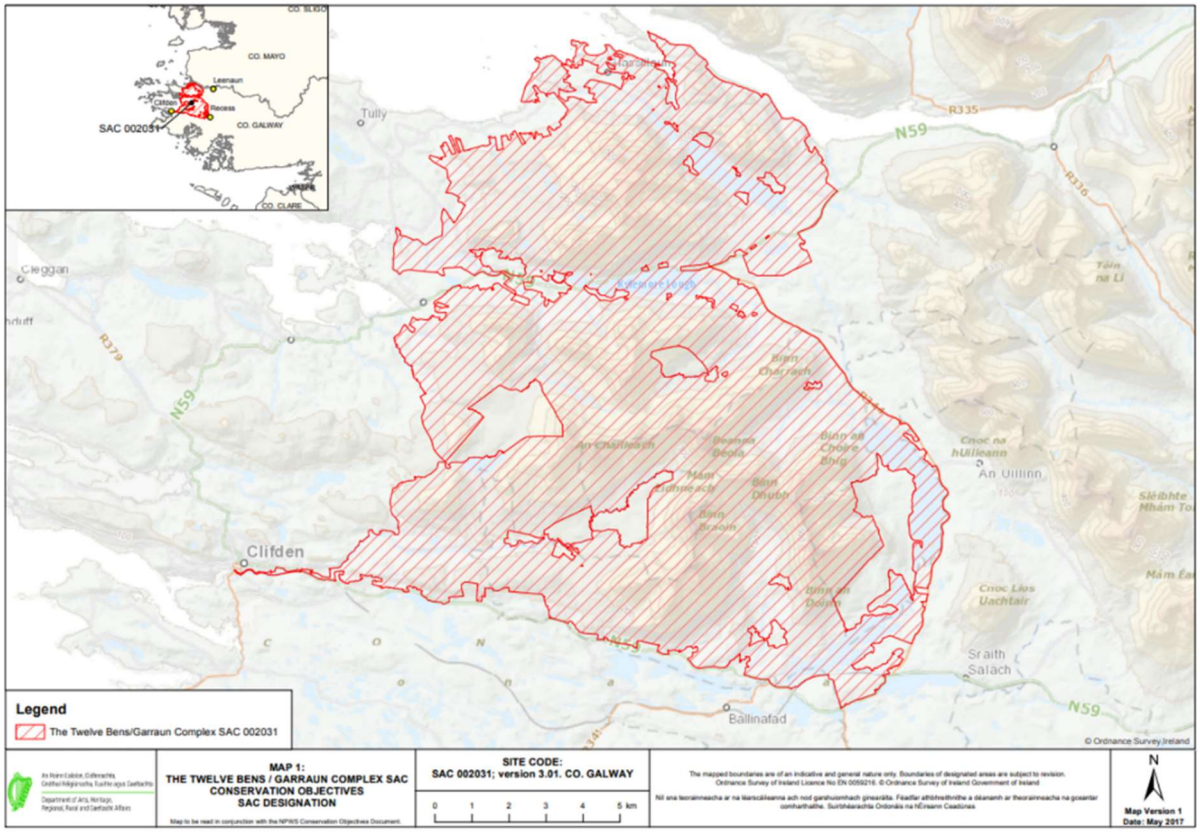
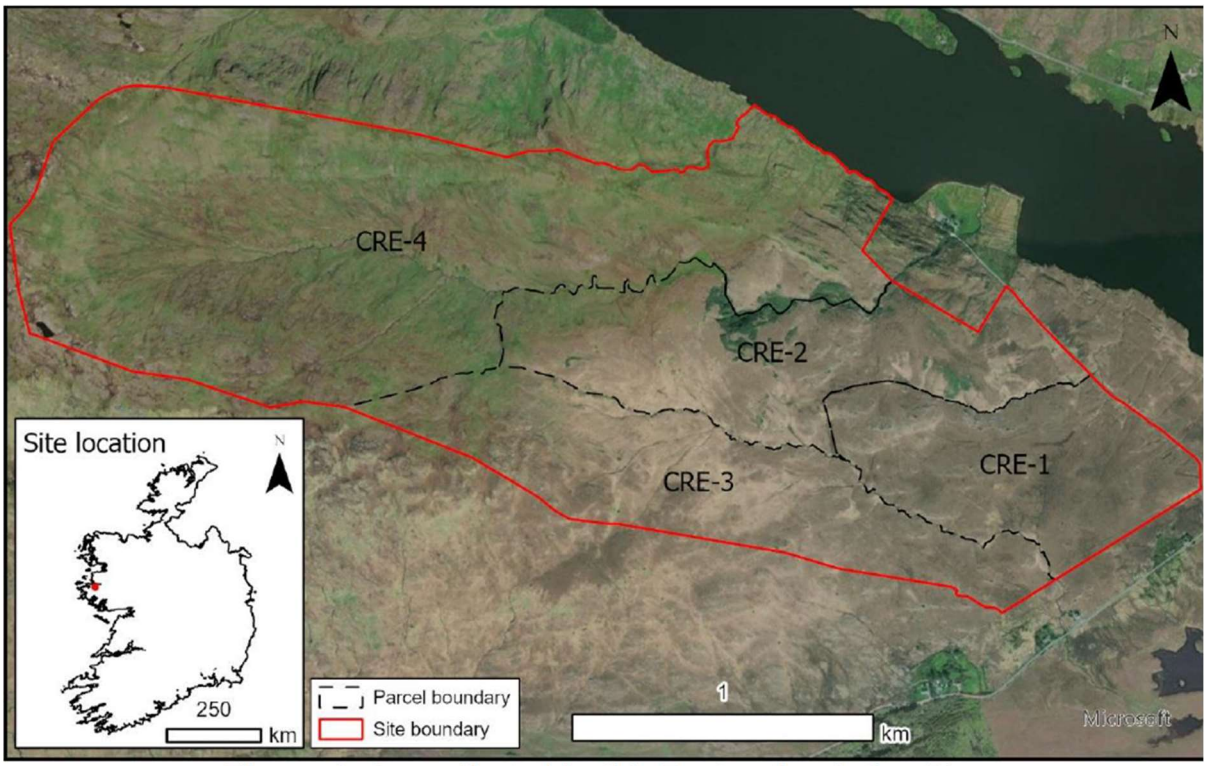


Figure 3 (below). NPWS Map Viewer with Ordnance Survey Ireland Discovery basemap showing location of the townland of Lecknavarna (light blue polygon).

Figure 3 (below). Location of the restoration parcel boundaries within the site.



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