Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of Peatland Restoration and Invasive Alien Species control within Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC [Site Code: 002047] and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA [Site code: 004039] in County Donegal, 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 20th October 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 and Invasive Alien Species control measures in the Glaskeelan/Inshagh area of County Donegal, situated within Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC [Site Code: 002047] and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA [Site code: 004039]. The EAU have been furnished with a detailed peatland Restoration Action Plan (RAP) detailing the measures proposed by The Rivers Trust (TRT), through the Interreg NWE BUFFER+ Project to establish this location as a Peatland Restoration Demonstration Site, showcasing a variety of restoration techniques. These proposed measures are 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 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);
- Peatland ACTION – Technical Compendium. Peatland ACTION sharing good practice for peatland restoration techniques. NatureScot (2022);
- Higgins, G.T. (2008) Rhododendron ponticum: A guide to management on nature conservation sites. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 33. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland;
- Monaco, A., and Genovesi, P. (2014) European Guidelines on Protected Areas and Invasive Alien Species, Council of Europe.

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during October 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 23/10/2025

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 23/10/2025

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

Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC (Figure 1) is an exceptionally large inland site located in the centre of north-west Donegal. It includes a rich diversity of habitats and landscape features, including mountains, exposed rock and scree, blanket bogs, dry, wet and alpine heath, upland grassland, wet grassland, rivers, lakes, scrub and woodland. The area is generally mountainous, taking in most of the Derryveagh and Glendowan ranges and including the two highest mountains in Donegal, Errigal (751 m) and Slieve Snaght (678 m).

Atlantic blanket bog is the dominant habitat of interest, with much of it being relatively unspoilt. Indeed, the area around Cloghernagore constitutes the most extensive blanket bog system remaining in the north-west of Ireland. Overall, there are excellent examples of several types of blanket bog including Highland Bog (Cashelnagor and Dunlewy Far), Lowland Bog (Cloghernagore and Glenveagh Bridge), Domed Valley Bog (Derrybeg and Calabber Valley), Headwater Bog (Crockastoller and Carrickatimpan Mountain) and blanket bog apparently in the early stages of formation (Attinadague).

The site is of great scientific and conservation value, particularly for the large areas of excellent, little-damaged blanket bog it contains. It also includes good quality examples of semi natural deciduous woodland, heath, oligotrophic lakes and inland cliffs. The importance of the site is increased by the presence of a wide range of plant and animal species, including many rare or threatened Red Data Book species, and several that are listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive

The project site in the Glaskeelan/Inshagh area is dominated by blanket bog, and some poor fen, underlain primarily by granite bedrock with occasional intrusive outcrops. Current land use is mainly conservation management, as the site lies within the 45 km-long deer fence that encloses Glenveagh National Park. Key pressures include erosion from historic turf cutting and the presence of invasive species, both of which are largely concentrated within the 2.29 ha restoration subsection (Figure 3). The southern and central portions of the site are characterised by relatively flat terrain, while steeper slopes occur immediately outside the site boundary to the west and northwest. Within the restoration area itself, the ground rises gradually, creating a gentle increase in slope with an overall higher average gradient than the southern flats.

Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA which also encompasses the project site is of high ornithological importance with nationally important breeding populations of five species. Of particular note is that five of the species that occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Red-throated Diver, Peregrine, Merlin, Golden Plover and Dunlin (subsp. schinzii). A large proportion of Lough Barra Bog, a Ramsar Convention site and a Statutory Nature Reserve, is within the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA.

4.1. Purpose

Due to the current threats and pressures evident on the site, including; invasive alien species, degraded vegetation structure, altered hydrology and areas of exposed peat, this project proposes to implement a restoration plan (RAP) which addresses the erosion pressures facing the site. The proposed restoration plan has been developed to target the restoration of bare peat and degraded vegetation through the restoration of artificial drains, bare peat, eroding turf banks.

Artificial drainage is confined to the restoration area and originates from historic turf cutting, with no artificial drains present in the wider BUFFER+ site. While natural drainage and surface flows occur across the site, they are mainly functioning well and do not require major intervention. Ground assessment confirmed that old turf banks and artificial drains are disrupting hydrology and causing localised erosion within the restoration area; therefore, minor restoration measures – such as the installation of peat dams/timber dams/plastic dams, the use of coir logs and geotextiles to stabilise eroded surfaces, and re-profiling of turf banks – are proposed to re-establish hydrological function and reduce erosion.

The site is also subject to pressures from invasive species, most notably Prickly Heath (Gaultheria mucronata), which is the most widespread invasive present. In addition, small saplings of Rhododendron ponticum are scattered across the site.

Rhododendron ponticum is widely recognised as one of the most problematic non-native invasive species currently threatening Irish peatlands. By forming extensive, single species stands it effectively excludes native plant communities from their natural habitats. Increased awareness of its detrimental impacts, coupled with the discovery that it can act as a host for the plant pathogen *Phythopthera ramorum*, has recently lead to an urgent requirement for *R. ponticum* removal all across Ireland.

The importance of the threat of invasive alien species is reflected in a suite of international, European and national policy and legislation.

Habitats Directive (Article 6.2) obliges Member States to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and the significant disturbance of the species for which a site has been designated. In this context 'taking appropriate steps' means for the Minister to adopt the necessary legal and/or contractual measures to make sure that the deterioration of the natural habitats for which the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation has been designated is avoided.

5. Project Description

The total monitoring area extends to 7.27 hectares (the Buffer+ Site), of which a 2.29-hectare subsection in the north has been identified as the Restoration Area. For restoration planning, slope conditions are an important constraint. A total of 3 water table dip wells will be installed on the site to monitor water levels. Areas with high slopes will be excluded from intervention, while activities requiring machinery will be limited to zones of low to moderate slope and peat depth which is less than 1.5m where access and stability are safer. In particular, the installation of peat/timber dams will not be undertaken in locations where slope angles exceed 6 degrees, in order to ensure structural stability and reduce the risk of failure or erosion.

Field side observations show some parts of the turf banks which are currently covered with vegetation. Only active eroding peat banks will be considered for restoration actions. Additional actions associated with re-profiling will be necessary to prevent the potential formation of new areas of bare peat. A number of turf banks require re-profiling, with a total length of 236.89 m, with an average height of <1 meter. The objective of re-profiling is to reduce erosion, raise the water table and mitigate large fluctuations in the water table.

Hydrological control will require the use of coir logs and timber dams. Some turf banks can be stabilized using geotextile matting. A number of dams are required. Timber and plastic dams will be installed by hand. Peat dams will be implemented using machinery in areas where machinery will have low impact and has appropriate slope. The objective of the dams is to both raise and mitigate large fluctuations in the water table and regulate the flow of water from the site.

This site has had a long period for natural regeneration (free from grazing and human pressures), so any remaining areas of bare peat (>1metre) are recommended for geotextile. A total of 380m2 of geotextile is required. Coir Logs are necessary to manage water in relation to re-profiling activities and larger areas of bare peat erosion. Geotextile matting can be used on all turf banks where re-profiling is not feasible or sufficient.

Certain areas or features may be excluded from the process at the discretion of the NPWS at Glenveagh National Park, and/or The Rivers Trust, if necessary. Plastic dams are included for demonstration purposes but may be replaced by timber or peat dams. Prickly Heath is extensive across the size, particularly near the road north of the site, this project will not attempt to control prickly heath at this time. Some individual small samplings of R. ponticum are present through the site in very low densities, which will be removed manually. The development of these initiatives within targeted areas are in line with the Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC Site Specific Conservation Objectives - To restore the favourable conservation condition of blanket bogs. This approach, should build capacity and inform the process necessary within relevant Natura Communities for similar future initiatives.

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).

Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC [Site code: 002047].

NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC 002047. Version 1. Accessed 23rd October 2025.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002047.pdf

Qualifying Interests

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

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

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

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Inadequate***

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

European dry heaths [4030]

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]

~ *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***

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

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]

~ *Overall assessment of conservation status:* ***Bad***

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.

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 Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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; and, 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 Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Hydrological regime: river flow; and, groundwater discharge.
- Substratum composition: particle size range.
- Water quality.
- Vegetation composition: typical species.
- Floodplain connectivity: area.
- Riparian habitat: area.

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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; positive indicators species; lichens and bryophytes; ericoid species and crowberry; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness

European Dry Heaths [4030]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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; positive indicators species; cover of positive indicator species; dwarf shrub composition; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: senescent ling; signs of browsing; burning; growth phases of ling.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alpine and Boreal heaths in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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 indicators species; dwarf shrub species; negative indicator species; and, non-native species.
- Vegetation structure: signs of grazing; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; and, drainage.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicator species; non-native species; and, moss species.
- Vegetation structure: woody species and bracken; broadleaf herb: grass ratio; sward height; and, litter.
- Physical structure: bare ground; bare soil; and, disturbance.

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Blanket bogs (* if active bog) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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; positive indicators species; cover of positive indicator species; dwarf shrub composition; negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; bracken; and, soft rush.
- Vegetation structure: senescent ling; signs of browsing; burning; growth phases of ling.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground.
- 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 Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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; and, native trees and shrubs.
- Vegetation structure: Sphagnum condition; signs of browsing; and, burning.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage; and, erosion.
- 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 Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Freshwater Pearl Mussel Margaritifera margaritifera [1029]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Freshwater Pearl Mussel Margaritifera margaritifera in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Population size.
- Population structure: recruitment; and, adult mortality.
- Suitable habitat: extent; and, condition.
- Water quality: macroinvertebrate and phytobenthos (diatoms).
- Substratum quality: filamentous algae (macroalgae); and, macrophytes (rooted higher plants); sediment; and, 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 (Salmo salar) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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 Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park 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.

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) in Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Distribution.
- Number of populations.

- Number of colonies.
- Population: life cycle stage.
- Population size: area of occupancy; and, living sporophyte fronds.
- Population structure: young and unfurling fronds; fertile fronds; and, juvenile sporophyte fronds emerging from gametophytes.
- Habitat extent.
- Hydrological conditions: wet/damp microhabitats; relative humidity; and, desiccated fronds.
- Light levels: shading.
- Woodland canopy cover.
- Invasive species.

Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA [Site code: 004039].

NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives. Accessed 23rd October 2025.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004039.pdf

Special Conservation Interests

Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]

Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]

Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]

Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]

Dunlin (Calidris alpina schinzii) [A466]

Conservation Objectives for Special Conservation Interests

Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]

- 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.

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.

Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]

- 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 Increasing / Favourable.

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.

Dunlin (Calidris alpina schinzii) [A466]

- 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 decreasing.

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)

The project will increase awareness of the benefits of peatland conservation and specific conservation measures amongst land-owners and positively influence perceptions of sustainable land management and increase the number of landowners managing lands sustainably and/or facilitating peatland restoration.

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. As *Rhododendron ponticum* is known to negatively alter habitat, the implementation of the removal measures within these

sites as outlined above will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives. Notably:

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

- **Community diversity.**
- **Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes, potential dominant species, negative indicator species, non-native species.**

In the absence of the project, the Conservation Objectives, as outlined above, would not be achieved as there would be continued highly detrimental impacts of erosion of peat and Invasive Alien Species; *Rhododendron ponticum*, dramatically reducing levels of native habitat cover and species richness.

Particular threats to Blanket bogs will increase, with encroachment and replacement of representative native vegetation and the habitats rich bryophyte and lichen communities.

Restoration of peatland habitats will prevent further deterioration and support Site Specific Conservation Objectives of QI habitats for which Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC has been designated, notably:

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

- **Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; drainage; and, erosion**

The project will be beneficial to maintaining and working towards achieving favourable conservation condition of the peatland habitats in the site and the typical species of these protected habitat types. It will build in resilience and contribute to overall ecosystem function in the wider area.

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 site has undergone detailed hydrological assessment and is entirely within a watershed unit. Restoration measures will only take place in this unit. Since all actions are taken place within the watershed units, potential risks to water quality are considered negligable. The units north of the site are separated from the restoration units via the road.

Due to the localised spatial scale and limited temporal extent of the proposed measures there are not considered to be any effects beyond a *de minimis* level on any of the Special Conservation Interests for which the Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA has been designated.

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: Darren Ellis, Ecological Assessment Unit

Date: 23rd October 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 and Invasive Alien Species control measures within Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park Speciaal Area of Conservation and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains Special Protection Area 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] Darren Ellis (Ecological Assessment Unit, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 23rd October 2025.

12. Supplementary Information

Figure 1 (below): Cloghernagore Bog Glenveagh National Park Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Version 1. Yellow arrow indicates project location.

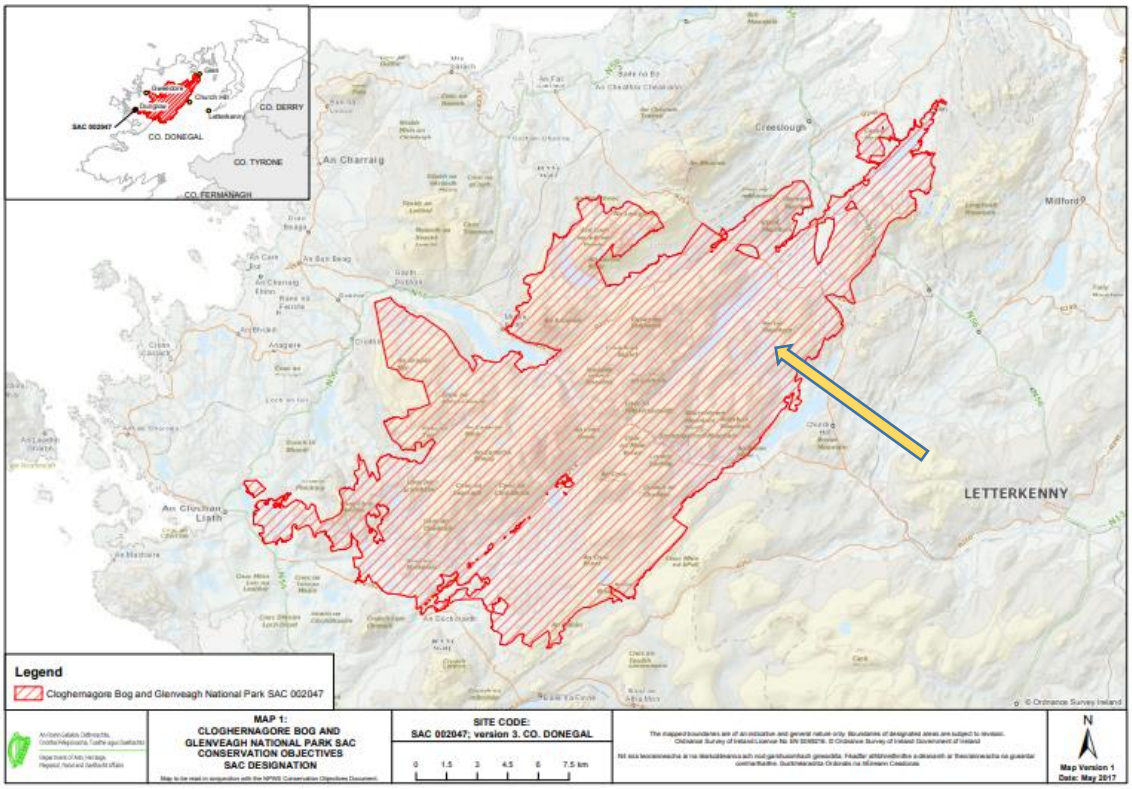


Figure 2. (below): Location of Natura 2000 sites, adjacent and overlapping designations of Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC and Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung SAC and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA.

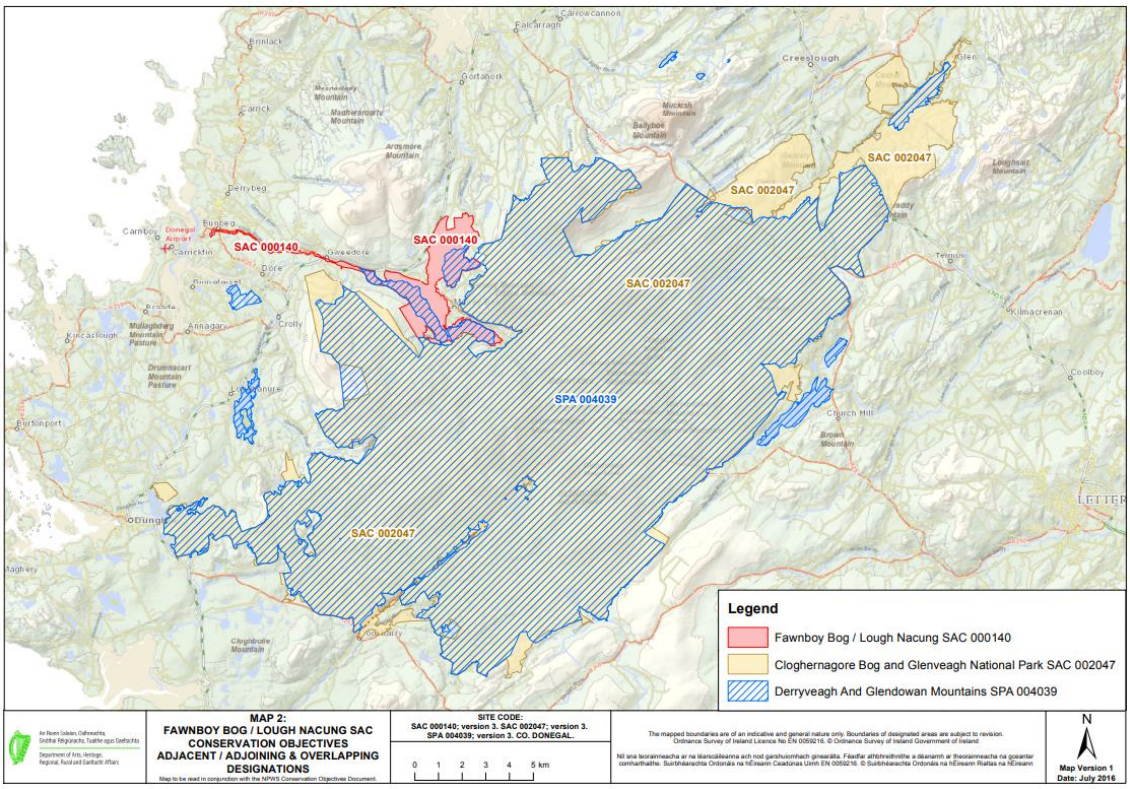


Figure 3 (below). Extent of the proposed peatland restoration area in Glenveagh National Park as per the Peatland Restoration Action Plan.

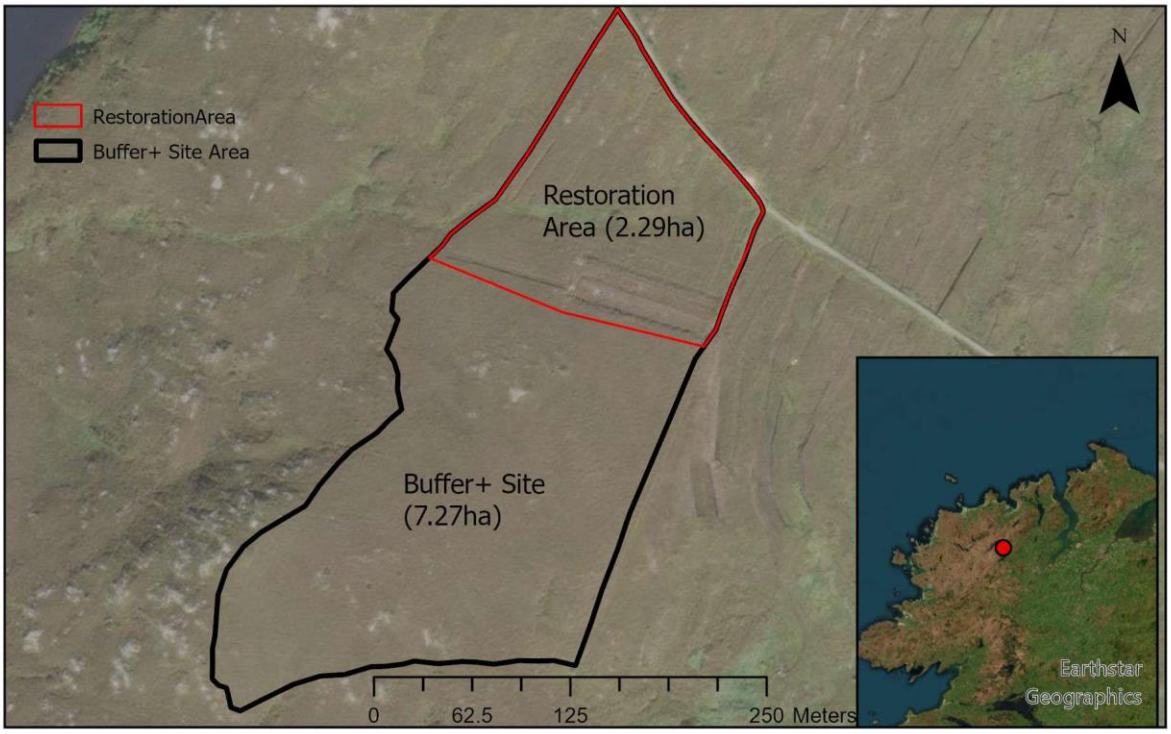


Figure 4. (below): Location of proposed peatland restoration area in relation to the Glenveagh National Park boundary.

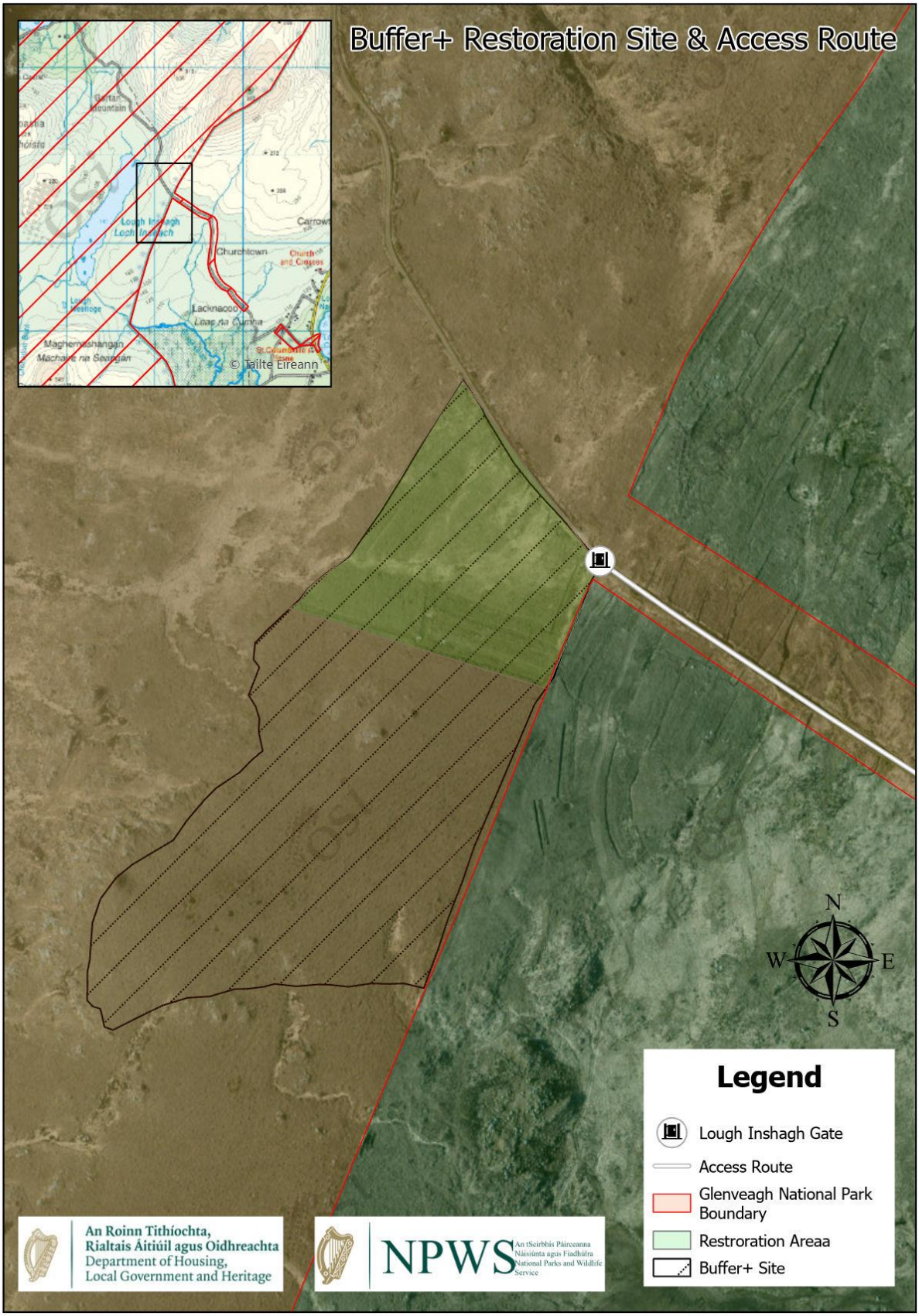
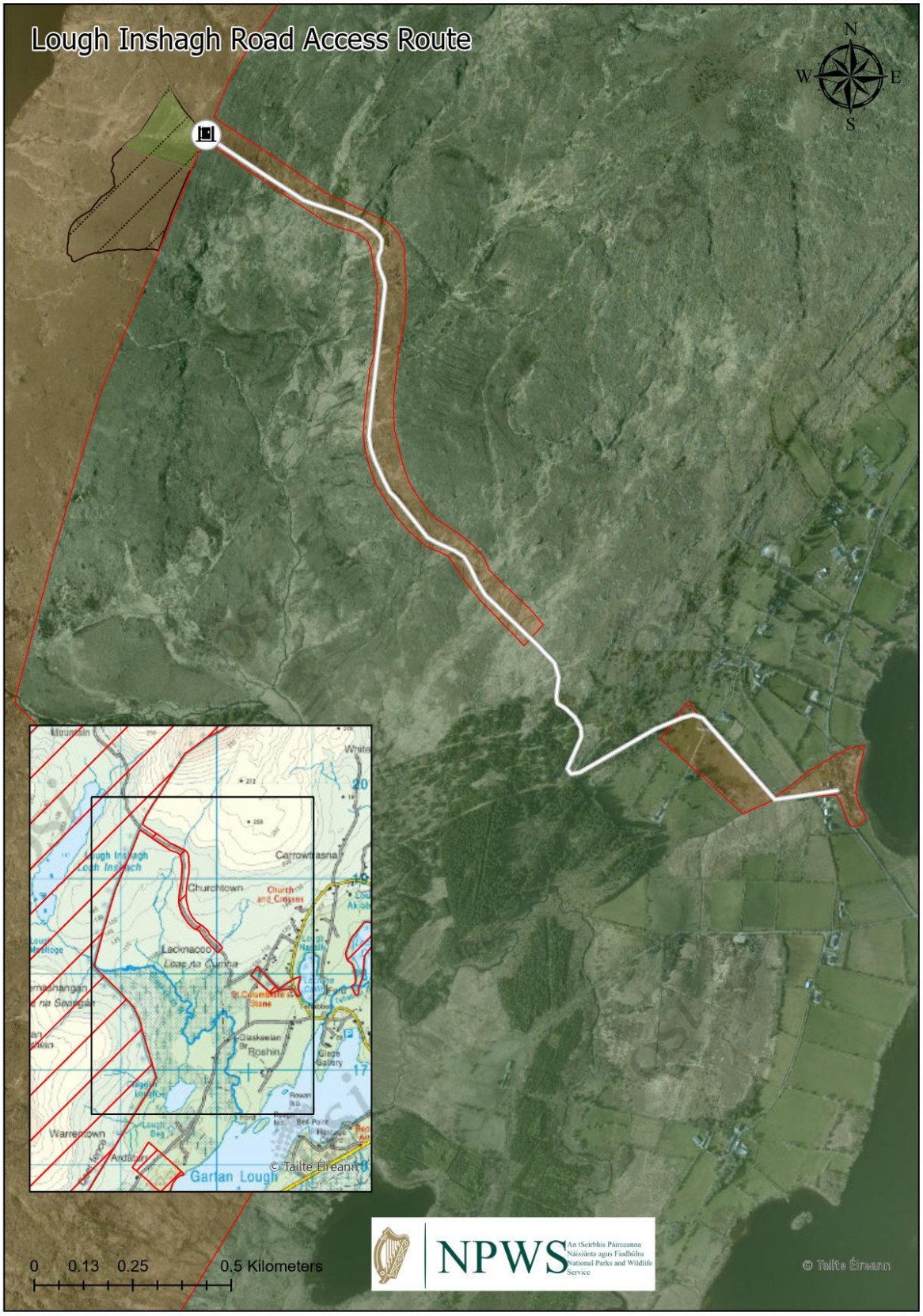


Figure 5 (below). Map showing proposed access route to areas for peatland restoration within Glenveagh National Park..



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