Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of Hen Harrier monitoring as part of necessary conservation measures within Slieve Bloom Mountains 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

Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Background 4
3. Legislation and Guidance 5
3.1. Guidance and Data Sources 5
3.2. Assessment Methodology 6
3.3. Legislative Background 6
4. Project Description 9
4.1. Project Methodology 9
5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures 11
6. Part 2: Identification of European Sites within the Potential Zone of Influence of proposed activities 16
7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects 16
8. Part 4: In Combination Effects 17
9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA 18
10. Part 6: Conclusion 18
11. Supplementary Information 19

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 21st March 2024, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 42A(3) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') furnished the EAU with a request for a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination for the proposed monitoring of Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082] within the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA Special Protection Area (SPA) [Site Code: 004160]. Hereafter referred to as "the project". Detailed method statements for Hen Harrier survey methods & recording guidelines were also submitted.

The EAU have evaluated and analysed the information contained in the referred to above documents and location maps provided and carried out a determination. The purpose of this document is to provide a record and an audit trail of the EAU reasoned thinking in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites.

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

2. Background

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

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

The Screening for AA process scrutinises the plan or project to determine if there is potential for likely significant effects either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European Site. European Sites are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Candidate SACs (cSACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). This 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,
- Ruddock, M., Wilson-Parr, R., Lusby, J., Connolly, F., J. Bailey, & O'Toole, L. (2024). The 2022 National Survey of breeding Hen Harrier in Ireland. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 147. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland.

3.2. Assessment Methodology

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

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

3.3. Legislative Background

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

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

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

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

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

[2] National Parks & Wildlife Service Designation Viewer. Accessed at ArcGIS Web Application 13/05/2024

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 13/05/2024

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

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

Article 6(4) states:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Under Regulation 42A(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011-2021 (S.I. 293 of 2021), the Ecological Assessment Unit is the competent authority in relation to screening for AA of projects and plans (such as the proposed monitoring) which the Minister proposes to undertake or adopt.

4. Project Description

Under Article 12 of the EU Birds Directive, the DHLGH is required to report to the European Commission on the implementation of national provisions taken under this Directive including specific reporting on status and trends of bird species.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) are undertaking Hen Harrier surveys in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA during the breeding season in 2024. This project aims to compare the efficacy of innovative aerial drone/thermal sensor methods against more standard/typical vantage point survey methods.

The Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA is situated on the border between Counties Offaly and Laois, and runs along a north-east/south-west aligned ridge for approximately 25 km. Much of the site is over 200 m in altitude, rising to a maximum height of 527 m at Arderin. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of Special Conservation Interest for Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). Much of the slopes are afforested, and overall coniferous plantations account for c. 60% of the site. The forests include first and second rotation plantations, with both pre-thicket and post-thicket stands present. Substantial areas of clear-fell are also present at any one time. The principal tree species present are Sitka Spruce (Picea sitchensis) and Lodgepole Pine (Pinus contorta). The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. This varies in composition and includes some wet areas with rushes (Juncus spp.) and some areas subject to scrub encroachment.

Survey effort will be focused in areas where Hen Harrier activity and potential territories and nest locations are identified from early-season vantage point surveys. The specialist drone surveys will then assess these areas according to the methodology defined below to determine nest locations and to allow monitoring of breeding status, success and productivity, with the objective to determine all Hen Harrier breeding attempt and territories in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA in order to provide a robust population estimate for the site.

This project is considered to be necessary in order to help better inform site management and protection measures required for breeding Hen Harrier for this SPA and to help address current knowledge gaps highlighted in the Conservation Objectives for Hen Harrier (including population size and breeding productivity).

4.1. Project Methodology

The main survey technique to be employed to confirm occupancy and locate Hen Harrier nest sites is drone surveys using a thermal sensor, however all visual or aural encounters with Hen Harrier and other species will also be recorded. The drone surveys will be carried out by a single, competent and trained surveyor who is licenced by the Irish Aviation Authority to fly the specific drones used for this survey (the DJI Matrice 30T) and is fully insured for these survey operations.

All areas of potential Hen Harrier breeding activity will be identified via early-season vantage point surveys. All areas holding suspected or known Hen Harrier territories will receive a minimum of two drone survey visits between May to July 2024 to determine the presence of breeding Hen Harrier. Surveys will be carried out using a drone with thermal sensor (DJI Matrice 30T) to accurately locate and monitor Hen Harrier breeding attempts. The drone with thermal sensor will be flown over the relevant search area at a height of 50 to 120m and using the thermal sensor, heat signatures which are suspected to be a bird and/or nest location will be identified and inspected using the optical zoom. All birds' nests including Hen Harrier, will be marked using the pin drop function which records a geo-referenced location for each bird/nest, and each pin will be labelled accordingly with the species name, evidence of breeding and the date.

Before flying the drone, a suitable vantage point will be selected which allows a clear line of sight over the search area and where the drone can safely take off without obstacles or potential disturbance to wildlife, livestock or people. It is important to be aware of access routes to the vantage point to avoid sensitive areas for other species (e.g. Merlin, Curlew etc.) and information on survey plans will be shared with NPWS on a regular basis. Disturbance issues to breeding birds will direct survey planning at all times. During the entire period the drone is in the air, any potential disturbance incident involving any bird species will be recorded (e.g. alarm calling, agitated behaviour, flushing from a potential nest site etc.) and responded to immediately by flying the drone away from the position where the disturbance incident occurred and safely landing the drone at distance. The drone will be flown at a minimum height of 50m above the search area (or potentially suitable breeding habitat), the flight height will be monitored using the laser range finder to measure distances where required. Once a nest (of any bird species) is detected, the use of the drone in this area will cease. The drone will not be used in the same area for more than 15 minutes (where nests are not detected) in order to reduce the potential for disturbance and will be used at a height which should not flush or distress breeding birds.

Surveys will be typically carried out in the early morning within a three-hour period from sunrise or in the evening, two hours before sunset. This survey timing is to avoid higher temperatures (generally greater than 15°C) and bright conditions when the ability to detect heat signatures will be significantly reduced. On survey days when the weather is overcast, cool and/or with prolonged periods of rain, it will be possible to survey throughout the day and not restrict to early morning or late evening visits. All areas of potentially suitable breeding habitat (where Hen Harrier activity has been identified) in the defined survey area will receive a minimum of two visits, between May to July. The first visit will be carried out in May (four weeks) and the second visit in June to July (eight weeks), with visits to individual search areas/islands separated by at least two weeks and additional visits to confirmed nest locations planned as required to monitor breeding success.

5. Part 1: Necessary conservation measures

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

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

Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA [Site code: 004160].

NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA 004160. Version 1. Accessed 13th May 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004160.pdf

Special Conservation Interests

Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]

Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Special Conservation Interests.

Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Hen Harrier in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Population size.
- Productivity rate.
- Spatial utilisation by breeding pairs.
- Extent and condition of heath and bog associated habitats.
- Extent and condition of low intensity managed grasslands and associated habitats.
- Extent and condition of hedgerows.
- Age structure of the forest estate.
- Disturbance to breeding sites.

The **Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC** [Site code: 000412] is an extensive site is dominated by blanket bog on a high plateau. However, on more steeply-sloping flanks wet heath vegetation occurs on shallower peat (typically 0.5-1.5 m deep). For the main part, the site is fringed by forestry plantations, although in a few places there remains a relatively undisturbed transition downslope to poorly-drained acidic grassland. The primary threats to Irish blanket bogs in general are afforestation, drainage and over-grazing, and current habitat quality is often dependent on past land use. The location of the Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC in relation to the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA is shown in Figure 2. A review and examination of the QI for the Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC has been undertaken in view of the project.

NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC 000412. Version 1. Accessed 13th May 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000412.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]

Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]

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

The **River Barrow and River Nore SAC** [Site code: 002162] 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. The site passes through eight counties – Offaly, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford. The location of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC in relation to the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA and the Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC is shown in Figure 2. A review and examination of the QI for the River Barrow and River Nore SAC has been undertaken in view of the project.

NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 1.0. Accessed 13th May 2024.

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

Qualifying Interests

Estuaries [1130]

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

Reefs [1170]

Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]

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

Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]

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

European dry heaths [4030]

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

Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]

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

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

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

Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]

Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]

Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]

Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]

Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]

Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]

Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]

Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]

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

Under Article 4 of the EU Birds Directive, DHLGH is required to take appropriate steps to meet the protection requirements of these species (Annex I listed species) and avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats in protected areas.

The DHLGH is also required to take special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution.

Under Article 10 of the EU Birds Directive, DHLGH shall encourage research and any work required as a basis for the protection, management and use of the population of all bird species; and, under Article 12 report on the implementation of national provisions taken under the Birds Directive.

The Site Specific Conservation Objectives seek to maintain protected SPA special conservation interests where evidence exists that it is in favourable conservation condition in the site, or where there is uncertainty concerning the assessed conservation condition of a special conservation interest but no reason to suspect deterioration in condition since designation.

Where evidence exists that a special conservation interest is declining and therefore not in a favourable conservation condition in the site, the Site Specific Conservation Objectives will seek to restore the protected interest.

The conservation condition of Hen Harrier in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA is considered as unfavourable due to low productivity and therefore the proposed monitoring work will help to identify, where possible, the locations of breeding Hen Harrier pairs in the SPA in order to inform metrics on nest success and the need for special conservation measures. In addition, it should help identify any factors which may be important for conservation planning e.g. territory habitat choices, and likely pressures/threats acting (e.g. disturbance from forestry operations etc.).

The implementation of the project within the site as outlined above will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives for Hen Harrier. Notably:

- **Population size.**
- **Productivity rate.**

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 potential impacts of the proposed survey on Hen Harrier and other priority species present in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (including Merlin, Curlew, Red Grouse) have been examined and considered.

Surveys of breeding birds in the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA using drone and thermal sensor technologies have previously been undertaken[4] applying the same methodology proposed for the project. Given the experience of licenced operator undertaking the practical drone work, the short-term duration and specific targeted location of measures, there is not considered to be any potential for disturbance beyond a *de minimus* level on SCI for which the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA is designated or other birds of conservation concern.

No likely significant effects or 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.

[4] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/131df-monitoring-of-merlin-in-the-slieve-aughty-mountains-determination-on-screening-for-appropriate-assessment/

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

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

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects

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

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

Tick all the boxes below which may apply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects

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

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

_____

_____

No ☑ **Yes** ☐ **Uncertain** ☐

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

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA

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

Likely significant effects are expected or uncertain.

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

Likely significant effects are NOT expected.

This activity Screens **OUT** and AA **is not** required. ☐

Signature: Ryan Wilson-Parr, Head of Ecological Assessment

Date: 13th May 2024

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the project, the EAU determines[5], in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011 Regulations, that the Hen Harrier monitoring within the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA [Site code: 004160] is entirely comprised of activities that directly support the Site Specific 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.

[5] Ryan Wilson-Parr (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) 13TH May 2024.

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA as per the NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA 004160. Version 1.

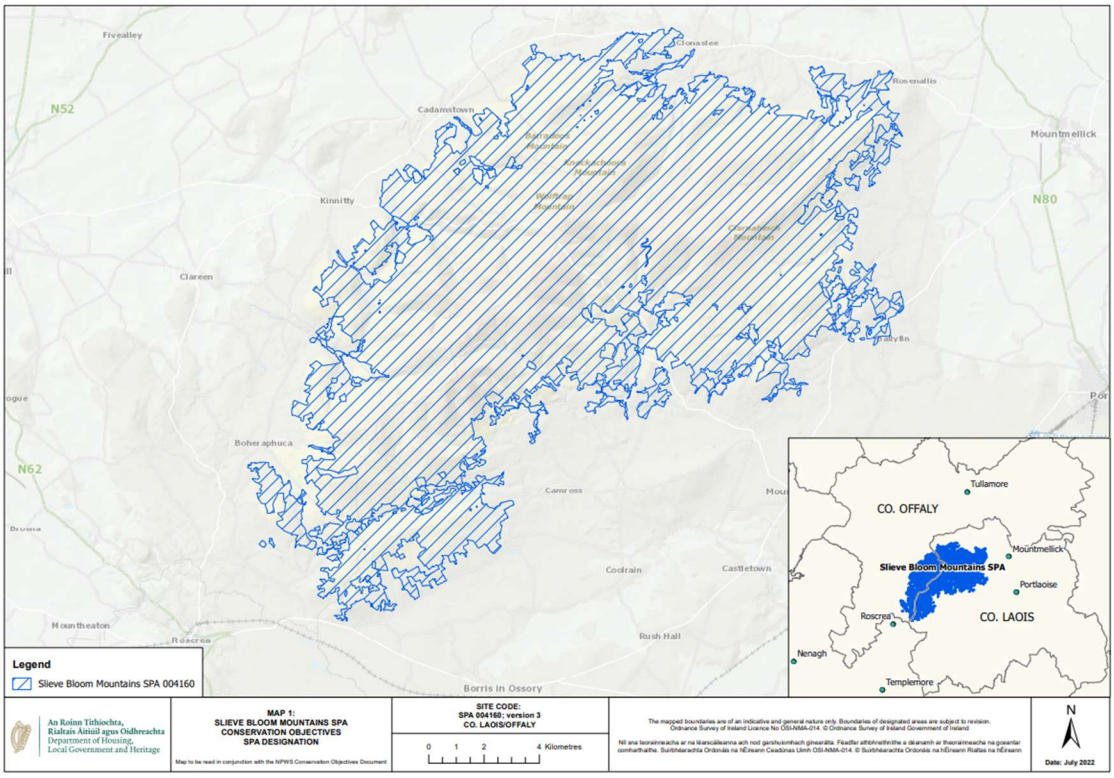
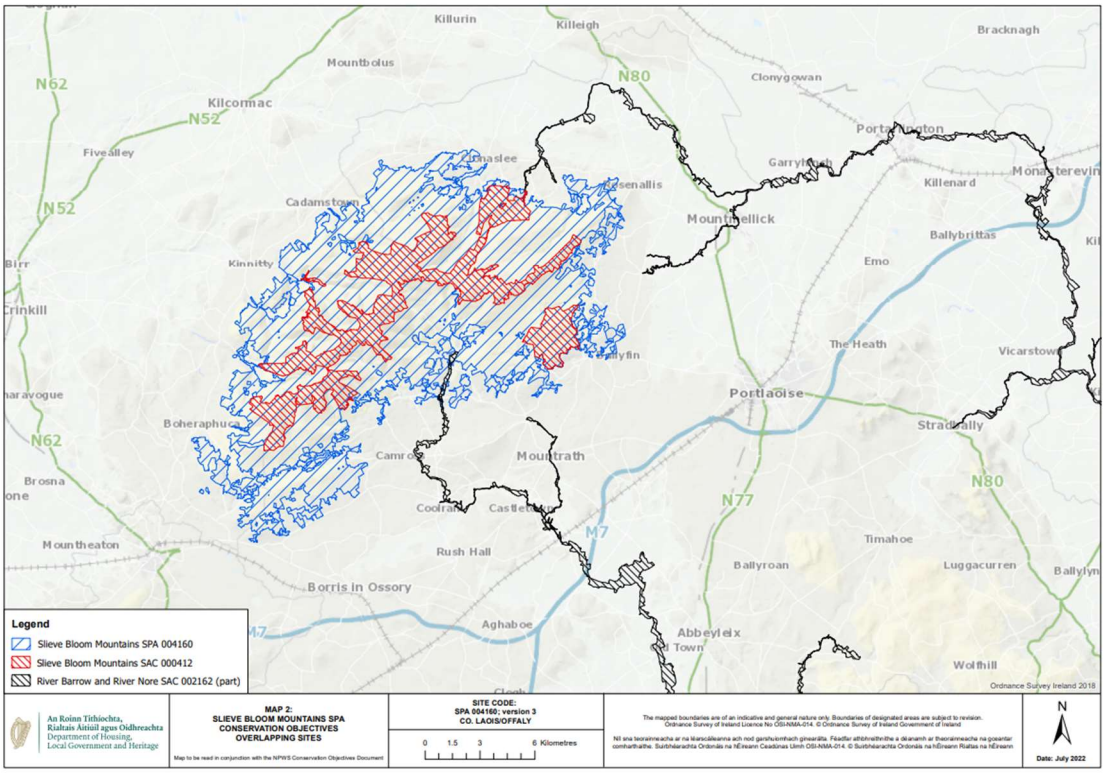


Figure 2. (below): Location of Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA in relation to the Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC as per the NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA 004160. Version 1.



npws.ie

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland