Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Adoption of necessary conservation measures within Lough Ree Special Protection Area and Lough Special Area of Conservation in accordance with Regulation 42A EC (Birds and Natural) Habitats Regulations 2011-2021

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
npws.ie

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1. Introduction

This determination on Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been made by the Ecological Assessment Unit (EAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021 ('the 2011-2021 Regulations").[1]

On the 26th September 2024, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 42A(3) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') furnished the EAU with a request for a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) determination for proposed necessary conservation measures within Lough Ree Special Protection Area (SPA) [Site Code: 004064] and Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation [Site Code: 000440]. Hereafter referred to as "the project".

The EAU have evaluated and analysed the information contained in the referred to above document 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 Regulations 2011-2021, a Screening for AA is required to be carried out on the project. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) is transposed in Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended, and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

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

The Screening for AA process scrutinises the plan or project to determine if there is potential for likely significant effects either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European Site. European Sites are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Candidate SACs (cSACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). This Screening for Appropriate Assessment describes the outcome of this analysis in respect of the project.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This section provides details on the adopted methodology with sources of guidance and information gathered to inform the preparation of the report.

3.1. Guidance and Data Sources

- AA under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- AA of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Guidelines for Good Practice AA of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2018); [hereafter referred to as MN 2018]; and
- 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 Environment Directorate-General, 2021); and,
- Laidlaw et al. 2021. Predator management for breeding waders: a review of current evidence and priority knowledge gaps. Wader Study 128(1): 44–55. doi:10.18194/ws.00220
- Hunt et al. 2023. Positive responses of breeding waders to targeted conservation advice and habitat management used to enhance existing wader conservation initiatives in Northern Ireland, Journal for Nature Conservation, Volume 75, 2023, 126465, ISSN 1617-1381.

3.2. Assessment Methodology

This report is based on review of desktop data. Sources of information utilised for this report and accessed during November 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 (QIs) for SACs and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site. Conservation Objectives for the site are defined for these Qualifying Interests.

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 13/11/2024

[3] National Biodiversity Data Centre Maps. Accessed at Maps - Biodiversity Maps (biodiversityireland.ie) 13/11/2024

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 Regulations 2011-2021, 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

Situated on the River Shannon between Lanesborough and Athlone, Lough Ree is the third largest lake in the Republic of Ireland. It lies in an ice-deepened depression in Carboniferous Limestone. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. The main inflowing rivers are the Shannon, Inny and Hind, and the main outflowing river is the Shannon. The greater part of Lough Ree is less than 10 m in depth, but there are six deep troughs running from north to south, reaching a maximum depth of about 36 m just west of Inchmore. The lake has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. It also has a good scattering of islands, most of which are included in the site.

Lough Ree Special Protection Area (site code 004064) (Figure 1) is of high ornithological importance for both wintering and breeding birds. It supports nationally important populations of eleven wintering waterfowl species. The site has a range of breeding waterfowl species, notably, nationally important populations of Common Scoter and Common Tern. Of particular note is the regular presence of three species, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover and Common Tern, which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Coot, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Common Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds. Some islands within the lake host important populations of breeding Curlew and these are now subject to conservation measures through the Breeding Waders European Innovation Partnership (EIP).

This site is dual designated as the Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (000440) (Figure 1) with the main habitat by area being the lake itself, and additionally; interesting shoreline, terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats. Lough Ree and its adjacent habitats are of major ecological significance. The lake has been classified as mesotrophic in quality, but the size of the system means that a range of conditions prevail depending upon, for example, rock type. This gives rise to local variations in nutrient status and pH, which in turn results in variations in the phytoplankton and macrophyte flora. Therefore, species indicative of oligotrophic, mesotrophic, eutrophic and base-rich situations occur within the site. Smaller lakes occur around the lake shore, especially on the east side, and these often have the full range of wetland habitats contained within and around them. A number of small rivers also pass through the site.

4.1. Purpose

The Breeding Wader EIP has been implemented to develop predation risk management and habitat management measures for at risk breeding waders in remaining strongholds of extant populations or sites with good potential for the return of recently lost or vulnerable populations. The programme aims to identify Wader Action Zones (WAZ) occurring in areas with different forms of land ownership and a spectrum of habitat types, employing existing tried and tested methods as well as new and innovative breeding wader conservation methodologies to enhance local populations through the implementation of Wader Action Plans (WAPs).

Pilot Farms will be set up in each WAZ for: development, education, research and demonstration purposes. They will provide opportunities for active participation and engagement in local areas and encourage buy-in from farmers and the community.

The initial pilot farms will be used to test and develop new innovative ideas, interventions and develop a costings model across the whole spectrum of Capital Actions, Predation Risk Management (PRM) and breeding wader habitat management. Pilot plans will provide a means to calculate costs and payments for these new management actions where clear benefit exists over and above existing measures.

4.2. Project Description

The project is located on Inchbofin Island (Figure 3) a part of which lies within Lough Ree Special Protection Area (004064) and Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (000440). Scrub is present on the island, comprised of a complex of large irregular clusters, smaller clusters and single bushes (Figure 4). Left unmanaged and uncontrolled, encroaching scrub vegetation will render an area unsuitable for nesting waders as established scrub replaces open wetland grassland habitats used for nesting and crucial for foraging. Scrub also provides cover for mammalian predators and perching for avian predators. Removing this scrub will reduce nest and chick depredation and increase the core area of breeding habitat by making a greater area available to ground nesting waders thereby delivering measures to support breeding wader conservation. The project will include the following specific elements:

- Detailed mapping of the scrub, carried out using drone cameras. Mapped scrub areas (metres squared) will be calculated and a phased primary scrub removal programme will be drawn up to cover the term of the Wader Action Plan (WAP).
- Removal of small stands of emerging scrub, in the form of Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Bramble, that are reducing available wader nesting areas. The scrub is sparse and intermittent in some areas but quite large in others. None

of it is established or longstanding woodland. Where planned this work will be carried out post breeding season (Sept-Feb).

- The project will also include annual follow-up maintenance and regrowth control. This will be managed by mulching cut scrub in tandem with mulching of rushes after the breeding season is over. It is envisaged that scrub removal will continue annually, on a phased basis, for the duration of this WAP.

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).

Lough Ree SPA. [Site code: 004064].

NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Lough Ree SPA [004064]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Accessed 13th November 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004064.pdf

Special Conservation Interests

Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004]

Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038]

Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]

Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]

Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053]

Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]

Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]

Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]

Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067]

Coot (Fulica atra) [A125]

Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]

Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]

Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]

Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

Conservation Objectives for Special Conservation Interests

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

Lough Ree SAC [Site code: 000440].

NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SAC 000440. Version 1. Accessed 27th February 2024.

Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000440.pdf

Qualifying Interests

Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Inadequate**

Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Bad**

Active raised bogs [7110]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Bad**

Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Bad**

Alkaline fens [7230]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Bad**

Limestone pavements [8240]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Inadequate**

Bog woodland [91D0]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Favourable**

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

~ Overall Conservation Status **Bad**

Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]

~ Overall Conservation Status **Favourable**

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Interests.

Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation in Lough Ree 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.

Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) in Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

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

Active raised bogs [7110]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Active raised bogs in Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- High bog area.
- Hydrological regime: water levels; and, flow patterns.
- Transitional areas between high bog and adjacent mineral soils.
- Vegetation quality: bog moss Sphagnum species.
- Typical Active Raised Bog Species: flora; and, fauna.
- Air Quality: nitrogen deposition.
- Negative physical indicators.
- Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species; non-native invasive species
- Elements of local distinctiveness.

Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]

The long-term aim for Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration is that its peat-forming capability is re-established; therefore, the conservation objective for this habitat is inherently linked to that of Active raised bogs (7110).

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration in Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- High bog area.
- Hydrological regime: water levels; and, flow patterns.
- Transitional areas between high bog and adjacent mineral soils (including cutover areas).
- Vegetation quality: central ecotope, active flush, soaks, bog woodland; microtopographical features; and, bog moss (Sphagnum) species.
- Typical ARB species: flora; and, fauna.
- Elements of local distinctiveness.
- Negative physical indicators.
- Vegetation composition: non-native invasive species.
- Air quality: nitrogen deposition.
- Water quality.
- Vegetation composition: typical species; negative indicators species; non-native species; and, woody species and bracken.
- Vegetation structure: broadleaf herb: grass ratio; sward height; and, litter.
- Physical structure: bare soil; disturbance.

Alkaline fens [7230]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens in the Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Ecosystem function: soil nutrients; peat formation; hydrology-groundwater levels; hydrology – surface water flow; water quality.
- Vegetation composition: community diversity; typical brown mosses; typical vascular plants; native negative indicator species; non-native species; native trees and shrubs; algal cover.
- Vegetation structure: vegetation height.
- Physical structure: disturbed bare ground; and, tufa formations.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.
- Transitional areas between fen and adjacent habitats.

Limestone pavements [8240]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of the Limestone pavements in Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; bryophyte layer; negative indicator species; non-native species; scrub; and, bracken cover.
- Vegetation structure: woodland canopy; and, dead wood.
- Physical structure: disturbance.
- Indicators of local distinctiveness.

Bog Woodland [91D0]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Bog woodland in Lough Ree SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes:

- Habitat area.
- Habitat distribution.
- Vegetation composition: positive indicator species; and, negative indicator species.
- Woodland structure: cover and height of Birch; dwarf shrub cover; ling cover; bryophyte cover; tree size classes; senescent and dead wood.

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

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) in Lough Ree 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, veteran trees; and, indicators of local significance.
- Hydrological regime: flooding depth/height of water table.
- Vegetation composition: native tree cover; typical species; and negative indicator species.

Otter Lutra lutra [1355]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Lough Ree 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.

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

The Birds Directive (Article 4) obliges Member States to ensure that in all Natura 2000 sites positive conservation measures are taken, where necessary, to maintain and restore the species present and their habitats, taking account of the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics of the area concerned.

Whereas the removal of encroaching scrub is a proven practical intervention shown to improve breeding wader success, the implementation of these conservation measures within the site as outlined above will directly contribute to the Site Specific Conservation Objectives.

The threats of predation (Eionet Code L06) are ranked as high importance for Special Conservation Interests in the European Union. In the absence of the project, the Conservation Objectives for Lough Ree SPA would not be achieved, as contemporary population dynamics data on breeding waders nationally indicate that they are not maintaining healthy populations on a long-term basis as a viable component of natural habitats.

c). Does this activity have the potential to impact negatively on any Conservation Objective (CO), Qualifying Interest (QI)/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) for this or any other European site?

The effect on European Sites and their QI/SCI within a defined Zone of Influence of the proposed conservation measures was assessed using expert

opinion. The Site Specific Conservation Objectives for the Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC were reviewed.

The potential effect of human disturbance on QIs of the SPA and SAC while scrub removal works are ongoing is considered negligible, given the spatial and temporal range within which the works are planned i.e. 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 any SCI for which the Lough Ree SPA is designated.

There is not considered to be any potential for disturbance beyond a *de minimus* level on QIs for which the Lough Ree SAC is designated.

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.

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

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

7. Part 3: Assess the likelihood of significant effects

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

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

Tick all the boxes below which may apply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Explain the effects:

_____

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

8. Part 4: In Combination Effects

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

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

_____

_____

No ☑ **Yes** ☐ **Uncertain** ☐

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

9. Part 5: Findings of the Screening for AA

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

Likely significant effects are expected or uncertain.

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

Likely significant effects are NOT expected.

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

Signature: Ryan Wilson-Parr, Head of Ecological Assessment

Date: 28th November 2024.

10. Part 6: Conclusion

Following an analysis of the project, the EAU determines[4], in accordance with Regulation 42A(8) of the 2011-2021 Regulations, that the removal of encroaching scrub associated with habitat management for breeding waders within Lough Ree SPA is 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 (Head of Ecological Assessment, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage). 24th November 2024.

11. Supplementary Information

Figure 1. (below): Location of Lough Ree Special Protection Area in relation to partial dual designation of Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SAC 000440. Version 1.

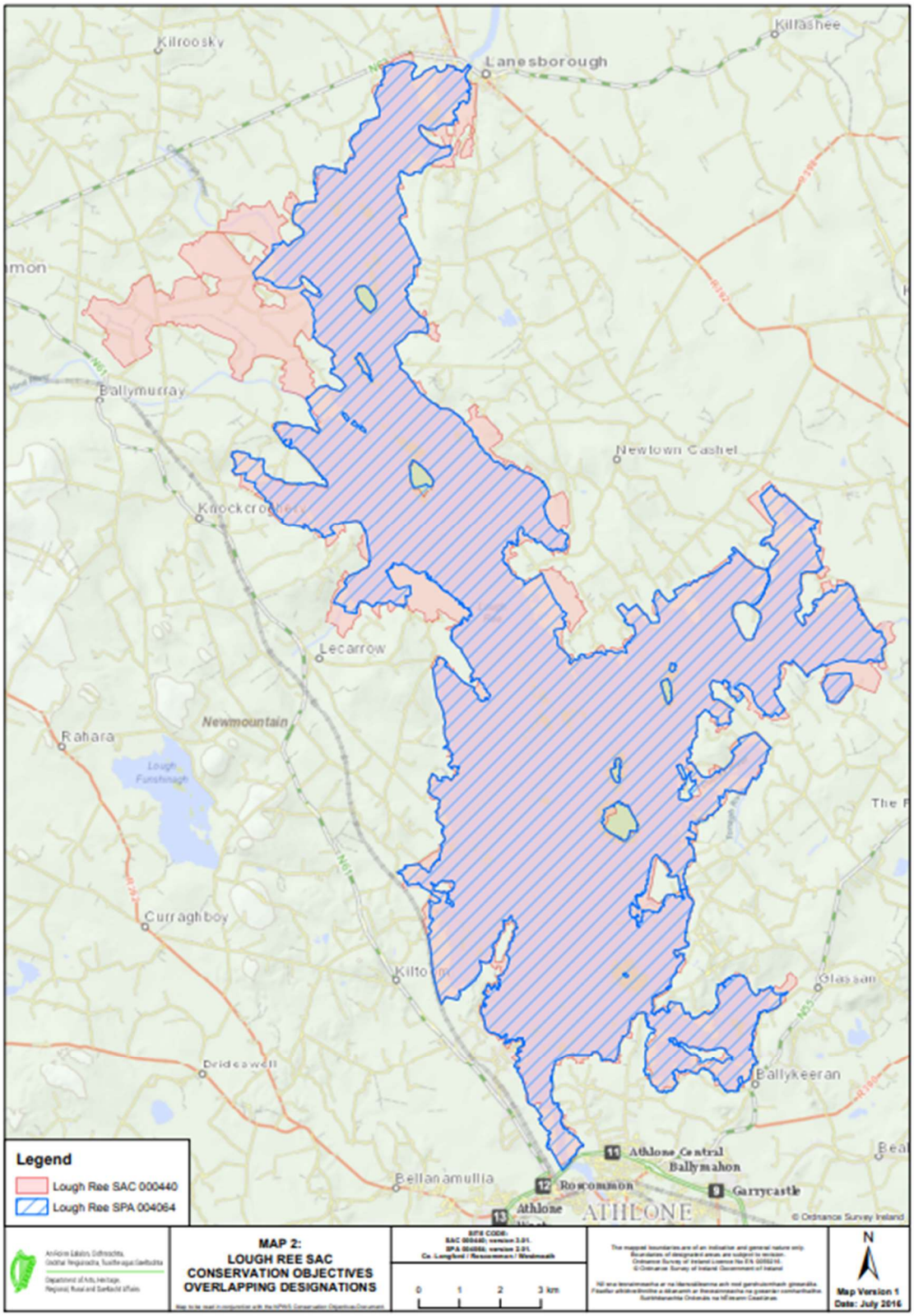

Figure 2. (below): Location of Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation as per NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SAC 000440. Version 1.

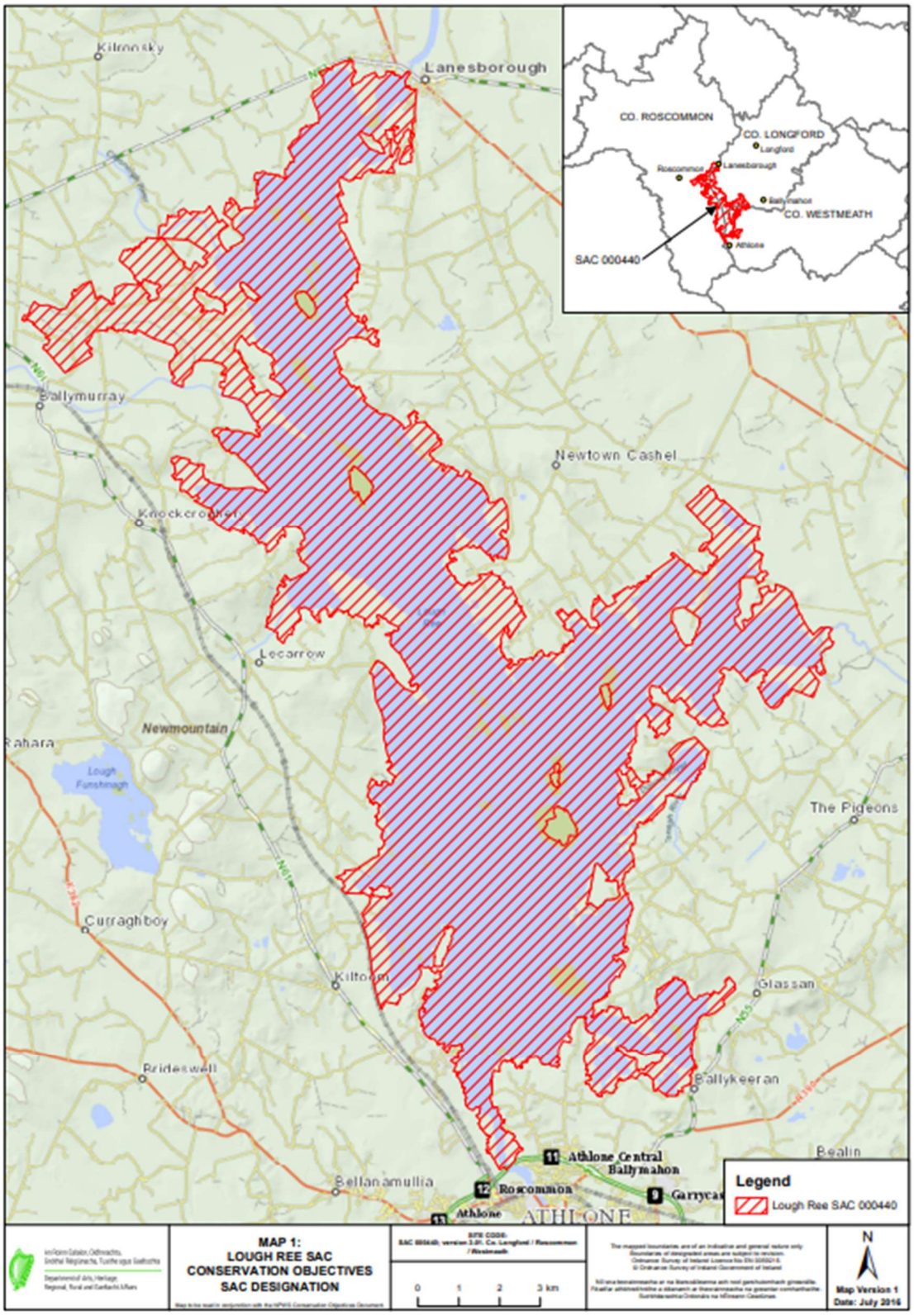

Figure 3. (below): Location of Inchbofin, delineated by red box, within Lough Ree as per NPWS designations viewer (2024).

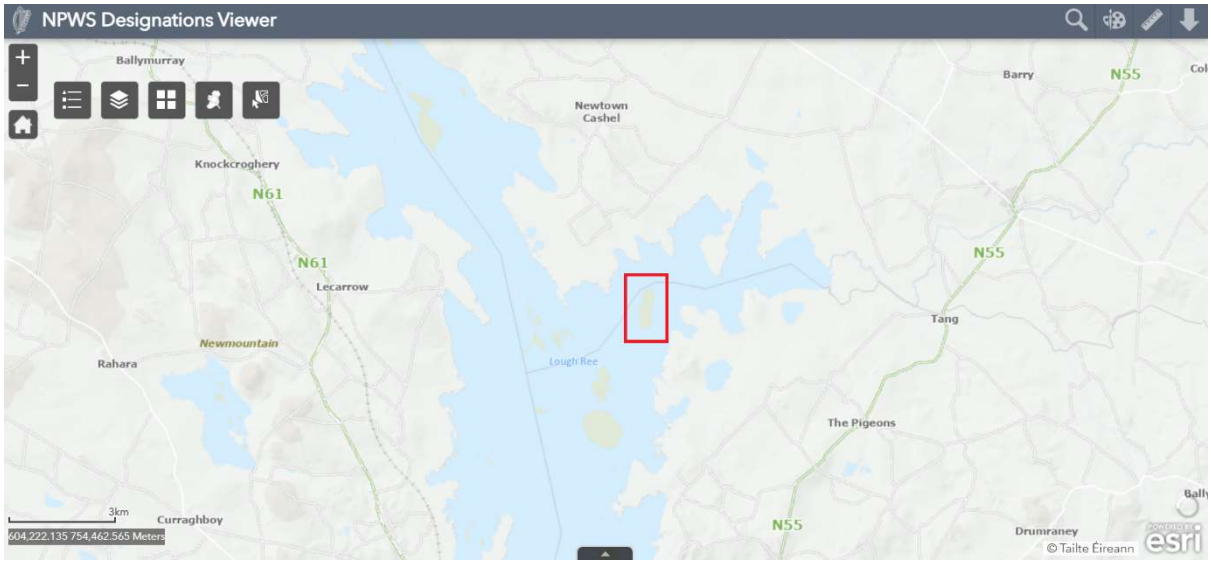

Figure 4. (below): Location of land parcels on Inchbofin (inverted) targeted for scrub removal (Breeding Wader EIP, 2024).

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