

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT - SCREENING REPORT -

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

OF THE

KILDARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2017

for: Kildare County Council

Áras Chill Dara,
Devoy Park,
Naas,
County Kildare



by: CAAS Ltd.

2nd Floor, The Courtyard,
25 Great Strand St.,
Dublin 1



MAY 2011

Table of Contents

Section 1	Preamble	1
Section 2	The Plan.....	3
2.1	Format.....	3
2.2	Brief Description of the Plan.....	3
2.3	Is the Plan Necessary to Management of Natura 2000 Sites?	4
2.4	Impact Avoidance Measures.....	4
2.5	Other Instruments	6
2.6	Cumulative Effects	7
Section 3	Natura 2000 Sites	8
3.1	Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area	8
3.2	Special Protection Areas	8
3.3	Special Areas of Conservation	9
Section 4	Assessment Criteria	18
4.1	Elements of the Plan with Potential to Give Rise to Significant Effects.....	18
4.2	Elements of Plan Likely to Cause Impacts.....	18
Section 5	Conclusions	19
5.1	Criteria for Assessment.....	19
5.2	Conclusion.....	19

Section 1 Preamble

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the Kildare County Development Plan (CDP) 2011-2017 in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

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 or 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 after 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.

Furthermore, 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.

In Ireland, Natura 2000 comprises sites that are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)¹.

AA comprises four stages²:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

Stage Three: 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 Four: 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.

¹ including Ramsar sites (classified under the Ramsar Convention 1971)

² *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)*, European Commission, 2002 and *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009

This report documents the first of these stages. It's conclusion that significant impacts on Natura 2000 will not occur means that further AA stages are not required.

Kildare County Council, through the application of the precautionary principle, must assume that due to:

- the level in the hierarchy and detail of the Kildare County Development Plan
- the fact that the County Development Plan (notwithstanding the use of the title "Plan") provides a strategic framework;
- the fact that the Plan does not dictate or indicate the location, extent, use, character or intensity of specific or any future landuses or developments to a level that would permit the prediction of locations of likely effect;
- the current state of knowledge of the Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives in the absence either of published management plans or of site-specific conservation objectives,

it is necessary to adopt a Plan that:

- integrates the requirement that further appropriate assessments will be required to ascertain that any subordinate plans will not adversely affect any Natura 2000 site, prior to adoption;
- makes explicit that any subsequent plan or project will only be compliant if further appropriate assessments of subordinate plans and developments demonstrate that they will not adversely affect any Natura 2000 site;
- includes policies, objectives and measures to mitigate or restrict the permitting of subsidiary plans, landuses or developments that might give rise to adverse effects on any European site.

Accordingly the effects on Natura 2000 sites are, and will continue to be assessed at this and at each relevant future stage in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity – from County Development Plan through Local Area (or other) Plan to Development Control (including EIA if relevant) so that the assessment will be revisited with increasing specificity at each subsequent stage. In this way, more detailed assessments, determinations, conditions or mitigations may be applied in light of the level of knowledge that may reasonably be expected to be available at each such stage.

Notwithstanding these considerations, an assessment of the impact of the Plan is now provided, as required by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The assessment method followed is deemed to be: proportionate to the level in the hierarchy and to the detail of the Plan; fit for purpose; scientifically sound; pragmatic; and as rigorous an assessment as is practicable in the context of this Plan - as acknowledged by the EC in their Article 6 guidance.

The preparation of this Plan has been an iterative process and this assessment has been used to inform the development of appropriate policies and objectives since the early stages of the Plan review.

Section 2 The Plan

2.1 Format

The headings in this and the following sections are derived from the European Commission's guidance document: *"Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)"*³

2.2 Brief Description of the Plan

2.2.1 Background

Under Section 9 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, every planning authority must make a development plan, setting the framework for all future development in the planning authority's area for the stated period, for the whole functional area of the authority every six years.

The Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare over the period 2011-2017 and beyond to the horizon year of 2022.

The Plan relates to the functional area of Kildare County Council, which is County Kildare, excluding the Town Council areas of Naas and Athy, as these are separate Planning Authorities. The Plan is, however, relevant to the two town councils as it sets out an overall vision, strategies, policies and objectives for the County as a whole.

2.2.2 Structure and Content

The Plan is set out in a written statement, with accompanying maps. It comprises 18 chapters and a number of appendices which can be grouped into the following sections:

- Chapters 1 and 2 set out the introduction, strategic context and core strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kildare.
- Chapters 3-14 set out detailed policies and objectives under a range of specific topic headings which the County Council seeks to achieve over the six-year life of this Plan e.g. settlement hierarchy, housing, economic development, retail, infrastructure, rural development, social and community, heritage and landscape.
- Chapters 15 and 16 outline urban and rural design guidance to promote quality developments.
- Chapter 17 and 18 incorporates environs plans, village plans and a development strategy for settlements located within the rural areas of the county.
- Chapter 19 sets out development management objectives and standards to be applied to future development proposals in the county. The purpose of these standards and objectives is to guide and assist the formulation of development proposals and to regulate the impact of development on the environment.

2.2.3 Vision Statement from the Plan

Through the pre-draft public consultation process a number of key themes emerged for consideration regarding the overall vision for the County over the period 2011-2017. These themes have been amalgamated and expressed in the following vision:

"To build on the strengths of the county by facilitating sustainable development, through the provision of high quality employment opportunities and residential developments supported by quality urban and rural environments with physical and social infrastructure to support communities throughout the county."

³ European Commission 2002

The vision is intended to act as a 'prompt' for all strategies, policies and objectives of this Plan.

2.3 Is the Plan Necessary to Management of Natura 2000 Sites?

The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites in the County. However, it does include, inter alia, measures to protect, conserve and manage the County's natural heritage in a prudent and sustainable manner, including Natura 2000 sites, and to seek its enhancement where appropriate and feasible.

2.4 Impact Avoidance Measures

The Kildare County Development Plan has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment where potential impacts on Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (including those habitats and species that constitute the qualifying features of Natura 2000 sites) have been examined. Where any conflicts exist between the policies that make up the Draft Guidelines and the strategic environmental objectives (SEOs) for the protection of biodiversity/flora and fauna, these policies have been further subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment (ref. section 4.1 also). Where such conflicts exist the primary action taken has been to *amend* the policy in question to ensure that impacts are avoided. In addition, policies that will contribute to the protection of Natura 2000 sites in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive have been included by the plan makers and as a result of the SEA.

These policies include the following:

Chapter 2: Core Strategy

Balancing the Environment with Sustainable and Appropriate Development

- CS 12: To protect and conserve the natural environment.
- CS 13: To protect and conserve nationally important and EU designated sites.
- CS 14: To promote and enhance biodiversity throughout the county.

Chapter 7: Water, Drainage and Environmental Services

Water Quality Policy

- WQ 1: To co-operate with the EPA and other authorities, in the continued implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and assist and co-operate with the lead authorities for the Eastern River Basin District and the South Eastern River Basin District.
- WQ 2: To ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans and their associated Programmes of Measures and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the county.
- WQ 3: To work, in co-operation with relevant organisations and major stakeholders, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the protection and improvement of the county's water resources.
- WQ 4: To continue efforts to improve water quality under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, (as amended) and by implementing the measures outlined under the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and complying with the requirement of the Surface Water Legislation Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 and other relevant Regulations.

Wastewater Policy

- WW 1: To secure priorities outlined in the Water Services Investment Programme - Assessment of Needs 2010 to 2012, subject to availability of finance.
- WW 4: To seek to ensure that all towns and villages are provided with an adequate waste water treatment plant within the limits of cost effectiveness and availability of finance.
- WW 5: To ensure that the siting of all waste water systems will have regard to the County Kildare Groundwater Protection Scheme.

Water and Drainage Objectives

- WD 2: To protect, improve and conserve the county's wastewater resources.
- WD 4: To improve water quality in the county in accordance with current European and National legislation.
- WD 5: To continually monitor and review the water quality standards of Kildare County Council in light of European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2007 (SI 278 of 2007), as may be amended and to ensure continuing compliance.

Chapter 10: Rural Development

Agriculture Policy

- AG 2: To encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.
- AG 3: To ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive.
- AG 4: To support agricultural activities which encourage bio-diversity as identified in the County Biodiversity Plan (adopted November 2008) and the National Biodiversity Plan (April 2002).

Extractive Industry Policy

- EI 5: To ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
 - Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
 - Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
 - Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna
 - Areas of significant archaeological potential
 - In the vicinity of a recorded monument
 - Sensitive landscape areas as identified at Chapter 14 of the Development Plan.
 - Scenic views and prospects
 - Protected Structures
- EI 7: To require submission of an Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive where any quarry / sand and gravel extraction is likely to have an impact on a Natura 2000 site (see Chapter 14).

Chapter 13: Natural Heritage / Biodiversity

Aim

- To protect, conserve and manage natural heritage designated at National and EU level and to secure conservation objectives in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development of the county.

Natural Heritage Policies

- NT 1: To facilitate, maintain and enhance as far as is practicalable the natural heritage and amenity of the county by seeking to encourage the preservation and retention of woodlands, hedgerows, stonewalls, rivers streams and wetlands. Where the removal of such features is unavoidable appropriate measures to replace like with like should be considered, subject to safety considerations.
- NT 4: To require compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to encouraging the management of features in the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.
- NT 5: To request the National Parks and Wildlife Service to prioritise the preparation of Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites which are located within the county.

Designated Sites and Species

- DS 1: To maintain, protect and where possible enhance the conservation value of existing European and national designated sites (NHA, SAC and SPA) in the county and any additional sites that may be proposed for designation during the period of this Plan.
- DS 2: To have regard to the policies and guidance of National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG in respect of proposed development where it is possible that such development may impact on a designated european or national site or a site proposed for designation.
- DS 3: To ensure the impact of proposed development on a pNHA is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) prepared by a suitably qualified professional, with planning applications and council developments.
- DS 4: To ensure an Appropriate Assessment as per Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and in accordance with DoEHLG guidance, is carried out in respect of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have

a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

- DS 5: To ensure that projects which may give rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites will not be permitted (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) unless for reasons of overriding public interest.
- DS 6: To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact on plant species, animals and birds listed in the Flora Protection Order, Wildlife Act 1976-2000, those listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, and those listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive.
- DS 7: To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service when undertaking, approving and authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law. In the event of a proposed development impacting on a site known to be a breeding or resting site of species listed in Habitats Regulations a derogation licence, issued by DoEHLG may be required.
- IW 4: To require that runoff from a developed area will not result in deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats, and that pollution generated by a development is treated within the development area prior to discharge to local watercourses.
- IW 5: To protect rivers, streams and other water courses and, wherever possible, maintain them in an open state capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora and discouraging culverting or realignment.
- IW 6: To consult, as appropriate, with the relevant Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to any development that could potentially impact on the aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats.
- IW 7: To ensure, where possible, residential and commercial developments use sustainable drainage systems in accordance with best current practice.
- IW 8: To ensure that floodplains and wetlands, where appropriate, are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection value.

Chapter 14: Landscape, Recreation and Amenities

- WC 4: To co-operate with the DoEHLG in the protection and conservation of both Canals and River Barrow, designated as a pNHA and cSAC respectively and in the sections of the River Liffey designated as a pNHA.
- PF1: To restrict development within the immediate environs of the Fen which may have a negative impact on the water quality and water quantity of the Fen.
- PF 2: To co-operate with the DoEHLG and other statutory bodies in the protection and conservation of the Fen, a designated cSAC and the immediate environs of the Fen

2.5 Other Instruments

Numerous other higher level measures further mitigate potential impacts of the Plan. These measures include EU Directives, National legislation and various guidelines. Principal among these are the following:

- **The Habitats Directive:** The European Council Directive on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) (Habitats Directive)
- **The Water Framework Directive:** The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
- **The National Biodiversity Plan:** UN Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 - National Biodiversity Plan 2002 is as a result of this.
- **The Wildlife Act:** Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (Wildlife Act)
- **The Birds Directive:** The 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (Birds Directive)
- **The Ramsar Convention:** Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar)
- **The Bathing Water Directive (BW):** Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC)
- **The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive:** (91/271/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC)

2.6 Cumulative Effects

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 set the planning framework within which the Plan has been prepared with the objective of achieving an optimal balance of social, economic and physical development in the Plan area. The effects of higher level Strategies and Plans, including those listed in Section 2.5 above, are considered insofar as they inform the Plan. Other plans considered include the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the River Basin Management Plans for the South Eastern and Eastern River Basin Districts. These plans are subject to their own Habitats Directive and other compliance requirements. Subsidiary plans and projects will be subject to separate assessment procedures in accordance with all applicable Regulations and Directives.

Section 3 Natura 2000 Sites

3.1 Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area

Following guidance from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, all Natura 2000 sites within both the Plan area and an area extending 15km around it are considered. They are mapped on Figure 1 and listed on the following table.

Natura 2000 Sites Within County Kildare		Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of the County Boundary	
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Code ⁴	Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Code ⁴
Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	004063	Wicklow Mountains SPA	004040
Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs)	Code	Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs)	Code
Ballynafagh Bog	000391	Ballyprior Grassland	002256
Ballynafagh Lake	001387	Glenasmole Valley	001209
Mouds Bog	002331	Holdenstown Bog	001757
Pollardstown Fen	000396	Mount Hevey Bog	002342
Red Bog, Kildare	000397	Mountmellick	002141
River Barrow and River Nore	002162	River Boyne And River Blackwater	002299
Rye Water Valley/Carnton	001398	Slaney River Valley	000781
		The Long Derries, Edenderry	000925
		Wicklow Mountains	002122

Table 1 Natura 2000 Sites within the County and within 15km of the County Boundary

3.2 Special Protection Areas

3.2.1 Introduction

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - by the DEHLG due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the European Union.

There is one SPA within the County which is detailed in Section 3.2.2 below. The only SPA which falls within 15km of the County boundary is described in Section 3.2.3 of this report. The characteristics⁵ of these sites are summarised and then their conservation objectives⁶ are listed.

3.2.2 SPA within the County

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Side Code 004063): Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, located in the western foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, was created in 1944 by damming of the River Liffey for the purpose of generating electricity from hydropower. The reservoir covers an area of approximately 20 square kilometres and is the largest inland water body in the mideast and south-east regions. The reservoir receives water from two main sources, the River Liffey at the northern end, and the King's River at the southern end. The exit is into the River Liffey gorge at the western end. Underlying the reservoir are sands and gravels deposited during the last glaciation. The shores of the lake are mostly sandy. When water levels are low the exposed lake muds are colonised by an ephemeral flora of annual plant species.

⁴ Each cSAC and SPA is assigned a unique six digit site code by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

⁵ A site's characteristics are outlined in its site synopsis as provided by the NPWS available at <http://www.npws.ie/en/ProtectedSites/>. Text in this section is taken directly from the NPWS site synopses as downloaded in October 2009.

⁶ Source: NPWS (2009). Note that for SPAs, the NPWS provides one conservation objective which they call the *Main* Conservation Objective.

Poulaphouca Reservoir is of international importance for its Greylag Goose population, which is one of the largest in the country. The site provides the main roost for the birds, with feeding occurring mostly on improved grassland outside of the site. An average peak of 1,058 individuals occurred during the five seasons 1995/96 to 1999/00. Breeding birds at the site include Great Crested Grebe (several pairs), which is localised in its distribution in eastern Ireland, as well as Snipe and Lapwing. The principal interest of the site is the Greylag Goose population, which is of international importance. A range of other wildfowl species also occurs, including Whooper Swan, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site is also notable as a winter roost for gulls, especially Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Main Conservation Objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Greylag Goose, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wetland & Waterbirds

3.2.3 SPA within 15km of the County Boundary

Wicklow Mountains SPA (Site Code 004040): This is an extensive upland site, comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. The Wicklow uplands are the only regular location in Ireland where Goosander breeds, with the Glendalough lakes being a regular site. The site, which is within the Wicklow Mountains National Park, is fragmented into about twenty separate parcels of land. Much of the site is State-owned and managed for nature conservation based on traditional landuses for the uplands. The most common landuse is traditional sheep grazing. Other land uses include turf-cutting, mostly by hand though some machine-cutting also occurs. Grazing by sheep and deer in the woodlands can be damaging as it prevents or reduces regeneration. Dublin City is close to the site and amenity use is very high; if not properly controlled, recreational activities could cause disturbance to some bird species. This site is of high ornithological importance as it supports very good examples of upland and woodland bird communities. Several of the species which occur are very rare at a national level. Two species, Ring Ouzel and Red Grouse, are Red-listed and their status is of high conservation concern. Also of note is that Merlin and Peregrine are both listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

Main Conservation Objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Merlin, Peregrine.

3.3 Special Areas of Conservation

3.3.1 Introduction

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC), referred to as the Habitats Directive, by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The sites are candidate sites because they are currently under consideration by the Commission of the European Union.

There are seven cSACs within the Plan area which are detailed in Section 3.3.2 below. The nine cSACs which fall within 15km of the Plan boundary are set out in Section 3.3.3 of this report. The characteristics⁷ of these sites are summarised and then their draft conservation objectives⁸ are listed.

3.3.2 cSACs within the Plan Area

Ballynafagh Bog (Site Code 000391): This site is a raised bog situated about 1 km west of Prosperous in County Kildare. The site is within the territory of a breeding pair of Merlin, a species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. Several pairs of Curlew and Snipe breed on the bog. Scrub species such as Stonechat, Redpoll and Long-tailed Tit occur on the cutaway. The bog has been damaged by afforestation, mechanised peat-cutting and drainage. These three activities pose the main threats to the

⁷ See footnote 5 above.

⁸ Source: NPWS (2009). In the case of cSACs they typically provide three to four *Draft* Conservation Objectives for each site.

survival of raised bogs. Raised bogs are a rare habitat in Europe, and in Ireland continue to be under threat. Ballynafagh Bog, although damaged, is of added interest as the most easterly site with a high proportion of intact raised bog habitat remaining in Ireland.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Active raised bogs; Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration; Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Ballynafagh Lake (Site Code 001387): Ballynafagh Lake is located about 2 km north-west of Prosperous in Co. Kildare. It is a shallow alkaline lake with patches of emergent vegetation in the middle as well as around the shore. The lake is surrounded by acid grassland, heath and bog. The Blackwood Feeder connects Ballynafagh Lake to the Grand Canal and is of particular conservation significance for the populations of two rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana* and *Pisidium pseudosphaerium*, that it supports. The former species is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the latter has previously been recorded only from sites along the Royal Canal. *Vertigo moulinsiana* also occurs in wetland vegetation by Ballynafagh Lake itself. A wide diversity of insects is also found at Ballynafagh Lake, including the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, a species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Although originally a reservoir, Ballynafagh Lake has developed very natural vegetation with some interesting plant communities, including alkaline fen, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site supports a high diversity of molluscan species, with some rare species recorded, including *Vertigo moulinsiana*, a species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also of ornithological importance.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Alkaline fens.
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Vertigo moulinsiana*, *Euphydryas aurinia*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Mouds Bog (Site Code 002331): Mouds Bog is located about 3 km north-west of Newbridge in Co. Kildare, close to the Hill of Allen, and includes amongst others, the townlands of Grangehiggin, Barretstown and Hawkfield. The site is a candidate Special Area of Conservation selected for active raised bog, degraded raised bog and *Rhynchosporion*, habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Mouds Bog is significant in terms of its high bog area and geographical location as it is at the eastern extreme of the range of raised bogs in Ireland. It is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising a large raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Active raised bogs; Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration; Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Pollardstown Fen (Site Code 000396): Pollardstown Fen is situated on the northern margin of the Curragh of Kildare, approximately 3km west-north-west of Newbridge. It lies in a shallow depression running in a north-west/south-east direction. Pollardstown Fen is unusual in Ireland as it is an extensive area of primary and secondary fen peat, lacking scrub vegetation on its surface. The fen has

ornithological importance for both breeding and wintering birds. In recent years two very specialised bird species associated with fens, Marsh Harrier and Savi's Warbler, have been seen at Pollardstown. Otter and Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), two species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, occur at Pollardstown. The species complexes represented are often rare in Ireland, with the sub-aquatic organisms particularly well represented. Of particular conservation importance, however, is the occurrence of all three of the Whorl Snails (*Vertigo spp.*) that are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Pollardstown is the only known site in Ireland (or Europe) to support all three species (*Vertigo geyeri*, *V. angustior*, *V. moulinsiana*) and thus provides a unique opportunity to study their different habitat and hydrological requirements. Much of the fen vegetation is now owned by the Office of Public Works and is a Statutory Nature Reserve. Pollardstown fen is the largest spring-fed fen in Ireland and has a well developed flora and fauna. Owing to the rarity of this habitat and the numbers of rare organisms found there, the site is rated as of international importance.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the Caricion davallianae; Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion); Alkaline fens.
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Vertigo geyeri*, *Vertigo angustior*, *Vertigo moulinsiana*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Red Bog, Kildare (Site Code 000397): Red Bog, Kildare is located 3 km north of the village of Blessington in east Co. Kildare, close to the boundary with Co. Wicklow. It comprises a wetland complex of lake, fen and bog situated in a hollow between ridges of glacially-deposited material and underlain by rocks of Ordovician age. The site is a candidate SAC selected for transition mire, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Red Bog, Kildare is a site of particular conservation significance, supporting as it does, a good example of a transition mire, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Transition mires and quaking bogs.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

River Barrow and River Nore (Site Code 002162): This site consists of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow/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 is a candidate SAC selected for alluvial wet woodlands and petrifying springs, priority habitats on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected as a candidate SAC for old oak woodlands, floating river vegetation, estuary, tidal mudflats, Salicornia mudflats, Atlantic salt meadows, Mediterranean salt meadows, dry heath and eutrophic tall herbs, all habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected for the following species listed on Annex II of the same directive - Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Nore Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Crayfish, Twaite Shad, Atlantic Salmon, Otter, *Vertigo moulinsiana* and the plant Killarney Fern. A good example of petrifying springs with tufa formations occurs at Dysart Wood along the Nore. This is a rare habitat in Ireland and one listed with priority status on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The estuary and the other Habitats Directive Annex I habitats within it form a large component of the site. Extensive areas of intertidal flats, comprised of substrates ranging from fine, silty mud to coarse sand with pebbles/stones are present. The site is very important for the presence of a number of EU Habitats Directive Annex II animal species including Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera* and *M. m. durrovensis*), Freshwater Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*), three Lamprey species - Sea (*Petromyzon marinus*), Brook (*Lampetra planeri*) and River (*Lampetra fluviatilis*), the marsh snail *Vertigomoulinsiana* and Otter (*Lutra lutra*). This is the only site in the world for the hard water form of the Pearl Mussel *M. m. durrovensis* and one of only a handful of spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad. The freshwater stretches of the River Nore main channel is a designated salmonid river. In addition to the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, the site also supports two other

freshwater Mussel species, *Anodonta anatina* and *A. cygnea*. The site is of ornithological importance for a number of E.U. Birds Directive Annex I species including Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Bartailed Godwit, Peregrine and Kingfisher. Nationally important numbers of Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit are found during the winter. Wintering flocks of migratory birds are seen in Shanahoe Marsh and the Curragh and Goul Marsh, both in Co. Laois and also along the Barrow Estuary in Waterford Harbour. There is also an extensive autumnal roosting site in the reedbeds of the Barrow Estuary used by Swallows before they leave the country. Seventeen Red Data Book plant species have been recorded within the site, most in the recent past. Overall, the site is of considerable conservation significance for the occurrence of good examples of habitats and of populations of plant and animal species that are listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive respectively. Furthermore it is of high conservation value for the populations of bird species that use it. The occurrence of several Red Data Book plant species including three rare plants in the salt meadows and the population of the hard water form of the Pearl Mussel which is limited to a 10 km stretch of the Nore, add further interest to this site.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Estuaries; Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows (*Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima*); Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*); Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation; European dry heaths; Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels; Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*); Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles; Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Vertigo moulinsiana*; *Margaritifera margaritifera*; *Austropotamobius pallipes*; *Petromyzon marinus*; *Lampetra planeri*; *Lampetra fluviatilis*; *Alosa fallax*; *Salmo salar*; *Lutra lutra*; *Trichomanes speciosum*; *Margaritifera durrovensis*
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Rye Water Valley/Carlton (Site Code 001398): This site is located between Leixlip and Maynooth. It extends along the Rye Water, a tributary of the River Liffey. The woods at Carlton Demesne are the site of a rare Myxomycete fungus, *Diderma deplanatum*. Within the woods, Blackcap, Woodcock and Long-eared Owl have been recorded. Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Tufted Duck, Teal and Kingfisher, the latter a species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, occur on and about the lake. The mineral spring found at the site is of a type considered to be rare in Europe and is a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The Rye Water is a spawning ground for Trout and Salmon, and the rare, White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) has been recorded at Leixlip. The latter two species are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. The semi-aquatic snails *Vertigo angustior* and *V. moulinsiana* occur in marsh vegetation near Louisa Bridge; both are rare in Ireland and Europe and are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. The scarce Dragonfly, *Orthetrum coerulescens*, has been recorded at Louisa Bridge. The main importance of the site lies in the presence of several rare and threatened plant and animal species, and of a rare habitat, thermal, mineral, petrifying spring. The woods found on Carlton Estate and their birdlife are of additional interest.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*).
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Vertigo angustior*; *Vertigo moulinsiana*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

3.3.3 cSACs within 15km of the Plan Area

Ballyprior Grassland (Site Code 002256): Ballyprior Grassland, 4km south of the village of Stradbally in Co. Laois, is located at the north end of the Castlecomer Plateau on largely limestone bedrock. The site

contains orchid-rich calcareous grassland, a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Ballyprior Grassland was traditionally managed as a commonage for grazing of cattle and horses. But the recent division of the lands into private holdings has led to a drive to improve the agricultural quality and output of these lands. Much of the farmland in surrounding areas is improved. Recent damage has occurred to parts of the site and some damaged habitat has been excluded. Semi-improved grassland has developed from enrichment and fertilising in the west of the site, with persistent Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) in places. South of the site, recent afforestation has resulted in loss of contiguous grassland habitat. Ballyprior Grassland is an important example of orchid-rich calcareous grassland, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The site contains a diverse flora and an exceptionally rich mycoflora.

Draft Conversation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco Brometalia*).
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Glenasmole Valley (Site Code 001209): Glenasmole Valley in south Co. Dublin lies on the edge of the Wicklow uplands, approximately 5km from Tallaght. The River Dodder flows through the valley and has been impounded here to form two reservoirs which supply water to south Dublin. Petrifying springs, a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive occur here. Examples of calcareous fen and flush areas occur between the two reservoirs, where sedges (*Carex flacca* and *Carex panicea*) are joined by such species as Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*), Zig-zag clover (*Trifolium medium*) and the scarce Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*). Orchid-rich grassland occurs in the drier parts of this site and in places grades into Molinia meadow, both of these habitats are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The site provides excellent habitat for bat species, with at least four species recorded: Pipistrelle, Leisler's, Daubenton's and Brown Long-eared Bat. Otter occurs along the river and reservoirs. These habitats also support Kingfisher, an Annex I species under the EU Birds Directive. Glenasmole Valley contains a high diversity of habitats and plant communities, including three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The presence of four Red Data Book plant species further enhances the value of the site as does the presence of populations of several mammal and bird species of conservation interest.

Draft Conversation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco Brometalia*); Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*); Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion).
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Holdenstown Bog (Site Code 001757): Holdenstown bog is situated about 3km south-east of Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow. It is a small raised bog surrounded by transition mire which has developed in a kettle hole. Holdenstown Bog is a candidate SAC selected for transition mire, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The whole bog is very wet and the surface has a hummock-hollow topography. Holdenstown Bog is of conservation importance as an intact example of transition mire, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and for a range of plant species typical of incipient raised bog development.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Transition mires and quaking bogs.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Mount Hevey Bog (Site Code 002342): Mount Hevey Bog is situated approximately 4km north-east of Kinnegad, in the townlands of Cloncrave, White Island, Aghamore, Kilwarden and Kilnagalliagh. The Meath-Westmeath county boundary runs through the centre of the bog. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The Dublin-Sligo railway runs through the northern part of the bog isolating two northern lobes. The northern lobes are adjacent to the Royal Canal. The site is a candidate Special Area of Conservation selected for active raised bog, degraded raised bog and Rhynchosporion, habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Mount Hevey Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, pools, flushes and regenerating cutover, as well as a number of scarce plant species. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Active raised bogs; Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration; Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Mountmellick (Site Code 002141): This site comprises a disused stretch of the Grand Canal between Dangan's Bridge and Skeagh Bridge, approximately 3km east of Mountmellick in Co. Laois. The habitat is fen type vegetation, including Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Reed Sweetgrass (*Glyceria maxima*) and Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*). The area west of the bridge has been drained extensively and is now grassland. The rare snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* was recorded along here in 1971. The site was visited again in 1997 and the species was re-found. *Vertigo moulinsiana* is a glacial relict with a disjunct European population that is considered vulnerable due to loss of habitat, in particular, drainage of wetlands. For this reason it is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. In Ireland, the species is sparsely distributed in the central lowlands. It generally lives in calcareous wetlands, often fens. *Vertigo moulinsiana* was formerly more widespread in the canal area but has disappeared from most of its recorded sites with the dredging and reopening of canal navigation channels. Restoration of disused sections of canal is a threat. The Mountmellick site is important as it provides useful habitat for a relict population of *Vertigo moulinsiana*.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Vertigo moulinsiana*.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

River Boyne and River Blackwater (Site Code 002299): This site comprises the freshwater element of the River Boyne as far as the Boyne Aqueduct, the Blackwater as far as Lough Ramor and the Boyne tributaries including the Deel, Stoneyford and Tremblestown Rivers. These riverine stretches drain a considerable area of Meath and Westmeath and smaller areas of Cavan and Louth. The site is a candidate SAC selected for alkaline fen and alluvial woodlands, both habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected for the following species listed on Annex II of the same directive – Atlantic Salmon, Otter and River Lamprey. At Rosnaree river bank on the River Boyne, is Round-Fruited Rush (*Juncus compressus*) found in alluvial pasture, which is generally periodically flooded during the winter months. This rare plant is only found in three counties in Ireland. The River Boyne is a designated Salmonid Water under the EU Freshwater Fish Directive. The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, and habitats listed on Annex I of this directive, as well as examples of other important habitats. Although the wet woodland areas appear small there are few similar examples of this type of alluvial wet woodland remaining in the country, particularly in the north-east. The semi-natural habitats, particularly the strips of woodland which extend along the river banks and the marsh and wet grasslands, increase the overall habitat diversity and add to the ecological value of the site as does the presence of a range of Red Data Book plant and animal species and the presence of nationally rare plant species.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Alkaline fens; Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*).
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Lampetra fluviatilis*, *Salmo salar*, *Lutra lutra*. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Slaney River Valley (Site Code 000781): This site comprises the freshwater stretches of the Slaney as far as the Wicklow Mountains; a number of tributaries the larger of which include the Bann, Boro, Glasha, Clody, Derry, Derreen, Douglas and Carrigower Rivers; the estuary at Ferrycarrig and Wexford Harbour. The site flows through the counties of Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow. The site is a candidate SAC selected for alluvial wet woodlands, a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected as a candidate SAC for floating river vegetation, estuaries, tidal mudflats and old oak woodlands, all habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is further selected for the following species listed on Annex II of the same directive - Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Twaite Shad, Atlantic Salmon and Otter. Floating river vegetation is found along much of the freshwater stretches within the site. The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive including the three Lampreys - Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Salmon (*Salmo salar*), small numbers of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) and in the tidal stretches, Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*). A survey of the Derreen River in 1995 estimated the population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel at about 3,000 individuals. This is a significant population, especially in the context of eastern Ireland. The Slaney is primarily a spring salmon fishery and is regarded as one of the top rivers in Ireland for early spring fishing. The site supports important numbers of birds in winter. Little Egret are found annually along the river. This bird is only now beginning to gain a foothold in Ireland and the south-east appears to be its stronghold. Wexford Harbour provides extensive feeding grounds for wading birds and Little Terns, which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive have bred here in the past. The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, and habitats listed on Annex I of this directive, as well as important numbers of wintering wildfowl including some species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. The presence of wet and broad-leaved woodlands increases the overall habitat diversity and the occurrence of a number of Red Data Book plant and animal species adds further importance to the Slaney River site.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in British Isles; Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*); Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche Batrachion* vegetation; Estuaries; Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Alosa fallax*, *Lampetra fluviatilis*, *Lampetra planeri*, *Petromyzon marinus*, *Salmo salar*, *Margaritifera margaritifera*, *Lutra lutra*
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

The Long Derries, Edenderry (Side Code 000925): The Long Derries is located approximately 5km south-east of Edenderry and is part of a low esker ridge running from Edenderry to Rathdangan. The dominant habitat is dry calcareous grassland. The summer birdlife of this area includes Sand Martin, Whinchat, Whitethroat and Cuckoo. Nightjar, a rare species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, breeds on the site. Partridge, an endangered species in Ireland and one listed in the Red Data Book, is known from the site. Badgers have setts along some of the mature hedgerows. The western section of this site is used in connection with activities connected with the harvesting of peat. The eastern section of the site is grazed by cattle and horses. Grazing is essential for the preservation of the rare orchid, but overgrazing needs to be avoided. The Long Derries is of botanical importance due to the presence of good quality dry, calcareous grassland, an interesting gravel pit flora and the presence of three rare plant

species, two of which are legally protected. The presence of an interesting transition habitat from Esker to peatland, and a varied bird population, including the rare Nightjar and Partridge, adds to the site's importance.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco Brometalia*).
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Wicklow Mountains (Site Code 002122): This site is a complex of upland areas in Counties Wicklow and Dublin, flanked by Blessington Reservoir to the west and Vartry Reservoir in the east, Cruagh Mt. in the north and Lybagh Mt. in the south. Most of the site is over 300m, with much ground over 600m and the highest peak of Lugnaquilla at 925m. The Wicklow Mountains are drained by several major rivers including the Dargle, Liffey, Dodder, Slaney and Avonmore. The site supports many habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The two dominant vegetation communities in the area are heath and blanket bog. Heath vegetation, with both wet and dry heath well represented, occurs in association with blanket bog, upland acid grassland and rocky habitats. In places the heath grades into upland grassland on mineral soil, some examples of which correspond to the E.U. Habitats Directive Annex I priority habitat species-rich *Nardus* grassland. Deer are abundant, mainly hybrids between Red and Sika Deer. Other mammals include Hare, Badger and Otter, the latter being a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Pine Marten has recently been confirmed as occurring within the site. Among the birds, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Raven and Red Grouse are resident throughout the site. Wheatear, Whinchat and the scarce Ring Ouzel are summer visitors. Wood Warbler and Redstarts are rare breeding species of the woodlands. Dipper and Grey Wagtail are typical riparian species. Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, both Annex I species of the EU Birds Directive, breed within the site. Recently, Goosander has become established as a breeding species. Large areas of the site are owned by NPWS, and managed for nature conservation based on traditional landuses for the uplands. In all ten habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive are found within the site. Several rare, protected plant and animal species occur.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*; Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe); Blanket bog; Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (*Androsacetalia alpinae* and *Galeopsietalia ladani*); Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in British Isles.
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Lutra lutra*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

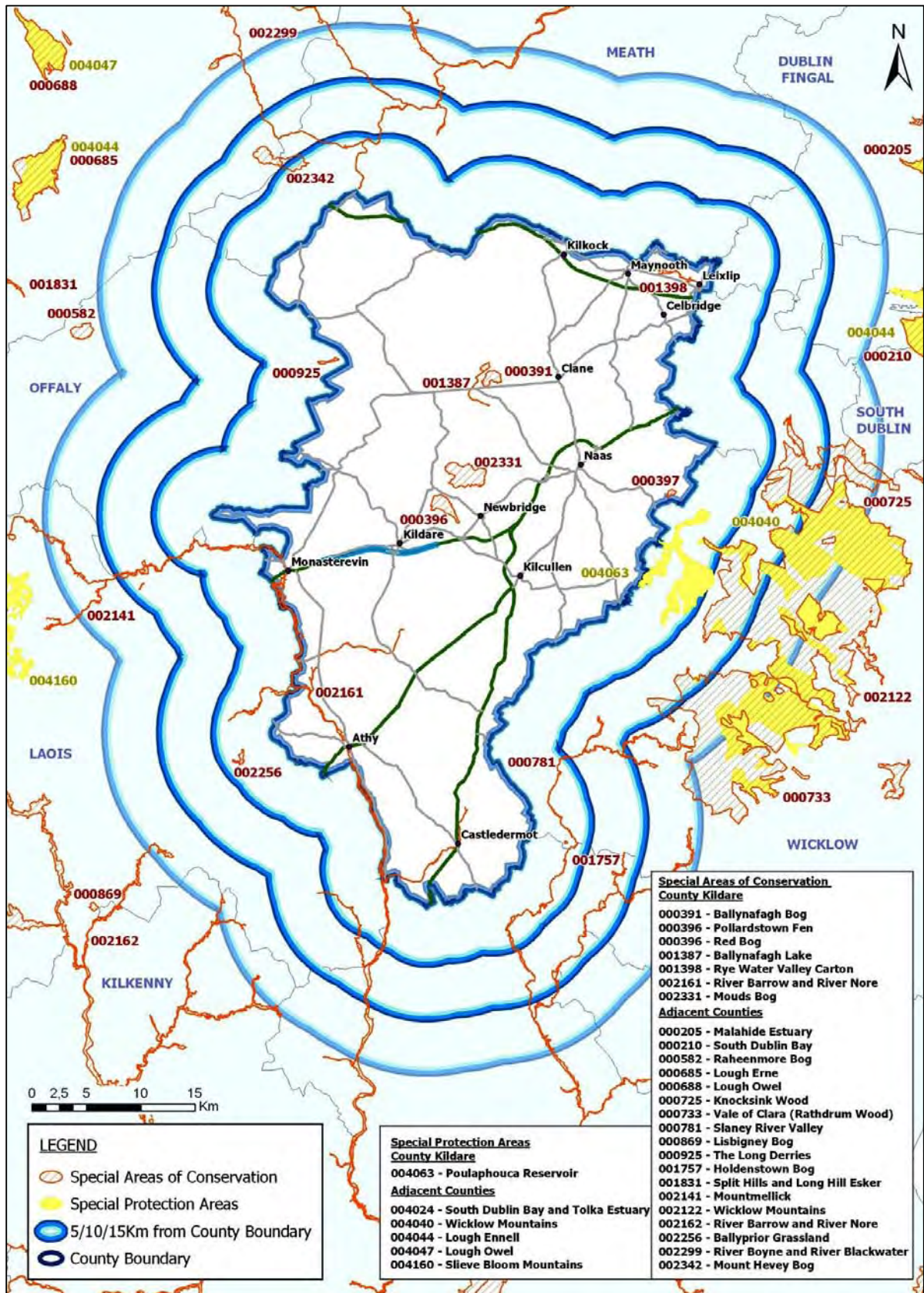


Figure 1 Natura 2000 Sites within the Plan area and within 5, 10 and 15km of the County

Section 4 Assessment Criteria

4.1 Elements of the Plan with Potential to Give Rise to Significant Effects

A list of the individual policies and objectives of the Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) with potential to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites is included in the left hand column of the assessment tables contained in the accompanying Appendix.

These have been taken from Section 8 - *Evaluation of Plan Provisions* - of the Environmental Report which has been prepared as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process. In that evaluation, each of the Plan policies and objectives were evaluated against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) listed below:

SEO B1: To ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites.

SEO B2: To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function as stepping stones - which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.

Thus the policies and objectives which have been identified as having the potential to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites are further examined in this assessment.

4.2 Elements of Plan Likely to Cause Impacts

The tables in the Appendix identify whether these policies and objectives are likely to cause any direct, indirect or secondary impacts (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the sites by assessing them against each sites' conservation objectives, as given in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above.

Where potential impacts are identified, then avoidance/mitigation measures contained as policies or objectives within the Plan as well as other laws/standards/procedures are cited and it is determined whether there will be any residual impacts or not.

Section 5 Conclusions

5.1 Criteria for Assessment

On the basis of the above analysis it can be concluded that no projects that will cause significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan⁵ (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects), considering the following factors⁹:

- size and scale
- land-take
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site
- resource requirements (water abstraction etc.)
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air)
- excavation requirements
- transportation requirements
- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.
- habitat area
- disturbance to key species
- habitat or species fragmentation
- species density
- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.)
- climate change
- key relationships that define the structure of the sites
- key relationships that define the function of the site

Furthermore, such developments as will be permitted on foot of the provisions of this Plan shall be required to conform to the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects.

5.2 Conclusion

The trigger for a Stage Two¹⁰ AA would be if the Plan were likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. This screening report evaluates the Plan to see if it needs to be the subject of a Stage Two AA. It finds that the Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon the Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites¹¹. Therefore, in accordance with the *Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, it is concluded that the Plan does not require any further assessment to demonstrate compliance with the Directive.

⁹ These factors have been taken from "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)"

¹⁰ ref. Section 1

¹¹ Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- (a) no alternative solution available,
- (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.