

**Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment Screening Report &
Screening Determination**

Project Strategic Cycle Corridor – Bury’s Bridge to Carrigwohill



Cork County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

**Completed by Ecology Office, Planning & Development Directorate
Cork County Council**

Date: January 2020

This document contains the Habitats Directive Screening Determination of Cork County Council in respect of the proposed Bury's Bridge to Carrigtwohill Cycle Corridor. The determination is based on information provided in the Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Assessment Report which has been prepared by Aecom on behalf of Cork County Council and which is appended to this document. This screening determination should be read in conjunction with the HDA Screening Assessment Report.

The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site.

Name of the Project

Bury's Bridge to Carrigtwohill Strategic Cycle Corridor

Description of the Project

It is proposed to develop a 7.7km stretch of 3-4m wide shared pedestrian and cycle path on the northern side of the L3004. The cycleway / path will extend from Bury's Bridge (Kilcoolishal) to Carrigtwohill, and will be segregated from the main vehicular carriageway by a 1m landscaped strip.

The project also provides for cycle parking, and formalised parking spaces and a footway at certain points along the route on the southern side of the road. The works will primarily involve working within the footprint of the existing carriageway, reducing the carriageway width to provide for the cycle/pedestrian path and other infrastructure.

There are four water crossings along the route on the Killacloyne Stream, a small unnamed stream at Killacloyne, Tibbotstown Stream and Anngrove Stream. A new precast bridge is proposed over the Killacloyne stream, and a new precast structure is to be installed over the small unnamed stream in Killcloyne townland. No instream works are required to install these structures. No new structures are required to be constructed over either the Tibbotstown or Anngrove Streams.

Existing drainage arrangements, which consist of over the edge drainage, where water runs off the existing carriageway into the grassed verge, will be continued for the extent of the route. There are gullies along the route which will be maintained.

The project requires excavation and removal of existing road surface material and the laying down of new surfaces. Excavated material is to be removed off site and disposed of to licensed landfill. Refuelling of plant and machinery is to be undertaken at fuel stations on the route.

European Sites Subject to Screening

The proposed development extends from west to east along the northern boundary of the L3004 to the north of Cork Harbour. The road and the Midleton-Cork railway separate the proposed cycleway from the Glounthaune Estuary. In addition, there is significant tree and hedgerow cover on the southern boundary of the road.

There are two European sites located within close proximity to the proposed route.

These are both associated with Cork Harbour and are:

- Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation – Site Code 1058.
- Cork Harbour Special Protection Area – Site Code 4030

The proposed cycle route has a direct hydrological connection to each of these two sites. At the closest points (Killacloyne), works will be required approximately 20m of the boundary of both the Special Area of Conservation and the Special Protection Area.

The new bridge structure at Killacloyne is to be located approximately 20m from the boundary of the SAC and the SPA and approximately 60m from intertidal habitat. The proposed crossing over the unnamed stream is to be located approximately 60m from the boundary of the SAC and the SPA and approximately 400m from intertidal habitat.

Consideration is given in this report to the potential for the proposed development to give rise to significant effects on each of these sites.

There is one other European site which is located within 15km of the proposed project. This is the Blackwater River Special Area of Conservation. This site is over 12km from the proposed development at its closest point, and is located in a separate hydrological catchment. No potential for negative effects arising from the proposed development on this site, or any other European site are identified. No other European sites have been identified which could be negatively impacted by the proposed development.

The **Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation** is a large Special Area of Conservation which extends through the North Channel of Cork Harbour, including intertidal and other estuarine habitats from Glounthaune in the west, to Midleton and Ballynacorra in the east. It includes the estuaries of the Owenacurra and Dungourney Rivers. The site is designated for the occurrence of two habitats which are listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive:

- 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*)

The Conservation Objectives for this site were published by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 2014 (Ver 1). The objectives are set out below as are a summary of the attributes and targets which are required to be met to achieve the objectives.

Conservation Objectives for the Great Island Channel SAC

Qualifying Feature	Conservation Objective	Targets
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Great Island Channel SAC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Area: The permanent habitat is stable or increasing subject to natural processes (723ha). • Community Distribution: Conserve the following community type in a natural condition: <i>Mixed sediment to sandy mud with polychaetes and oligochaetes community complex.</i>

Qualifying Feature	Conservation Objective	Targets
<p>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]</p>	<p>To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) in Great Island Channel SAC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat Area: Stable or increasing subject to natural processes including erosion and succession – Bawnard 0.29ha; Carrigtwohill 1.01ha. • Habitat Distribution: No decline or change in habitat distribution subject to natural processes. • Physical Structure: sediment supply: Maintain natural circulation of sediments and organic matter, without any physical obstructions. • Physical structure: creeks and pans: Maintain/restore creek and pan structure, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession. • Physical structure: flooding regime: Maintain natural tidal regime. • Vegetation structure: zonation: Maintain the range of coastal habitats including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession. • Vegetation structure: height: Maintain structural variation in sward. • Vegetation structure: vegetation cover: Maintain more than 90% of area outside creeks vegetated. • Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities: Maintain range of sub-communities with typical species listed in SMP. • Vegetation structure: negative indicator species: <i>Spartina anglica</i> No significant expansion of common cordgrass with an annual spread of less than 1% where it is known to occur.

Mudflats and Sandflats: This habitat type occurs in the Glounthaune Estuary immediately south of the proposed development.

Atlantic Salt-meadows: Saltmarsh vegetation which is potentially equivalent to the Annex I habitat type Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] is identified on Harper’s Island and at Killacloyne approximately 500m to the south of the proposed project area.

The **Cork Harbour SPA** is an estuarine complex which is primarily comprised of intertidal habitats, mainly mudflats as well as some other coastal and marine habitats. These habitats support very high numbers of wintering waterfowl. The Harbour regularly supports in excess of 20,000 wintering birds, making it an internationally important site and the fifth most important wintering waterfowl site in the country. The qualifying interests for this SPA are set out below, as are the Conservation Objectives which apply to the site.

Qualifying Interests

A004	Little Grebe	A141	Grey Plover
A005	Great Crested Grebe	A142	Lapwing
A017	Cormorant	A149	Dunlin
A028	Grey Heron	A156	Black-tailed Godwit
A048	Shelduck	A157	Bar-tailed Godwit
A050	Wigeon	A160	Curlew
A052	Teal	A162	Redshank
A054	Pintail	A179	Black-headed Gull
A056	Shoveler	A183	Common Gull
A069	Red-breasted Merganser	A183	Lesser Black-backed Gull
A130	Oystercatcher	A193	Common Tern
A140	Golden Plover	A999	Wetland and Waterbirds

Conservation Objectives - Attributes and Targets (summary)

Qualifying Feature(s)	Conservation Objective	Targets
<p>Little Grebe Great Crested Grebe Cormorant Grey Heron Shelduck Wigeon Teal Pintail Shoveler Red-breasted Merganser Oystercatcher Golden Plover Grey Plover Lapwing Dunlin Black-tailed Godwit Bar-tailed Godwit Curlew Redshank Black-headed Gull, Common Gull Lesser Black-backed Gull</p>	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of these species in Cork Harbour SPA.</p>	<p>Population Trend: Long term population trends for these species are stable or increasing. (Water bird population trends are presented in part four of the Cork Harbour Conservation Objectives supporting document (November, 2014).</p> <p>Distribution: No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by these species other than occurring from natural patterns of variation. Waterbird distribution from the 2010/2011 waterbird survey programme is discussed in part five of the Cork Harbour Conservation Objectives supporting document</p>
<p>Common Tern</p>	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Tern in Cork Harbour SPA.</p>	<p>Breeding population abundance: No significant decline in apparently occupies nests (AONs). Measures based on standard tern survey methods (see Walsh et al., 1995). In 2012 the total population of common terns that nested within the wider Cork Harbour was between 85 and 95 pairs , a proportion of which now breeds outside the SPA (RPS, 2014).</p> <p>Productivity rate: No significant decline in fledged young per breeding pair. Measure based on standard tern survey methods (see Walsh et al., 1995). The Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) (JNCC, 2014) provides population data for this species.</p> <p>Distribution: breeding colonies: No significant decline in location, number and area (hectares) of breeding colonies. The Common Tern harbour colony now largely breeds on artificial structures in at least two locations.</p> <p>Prey biomass available: No significant decline in availability of key prey items (Small fish, crustaceans, insects and occasionally squid. Key habitats: common tern forage in/over shallow coastal waters, bays, inlets, shoals,</p>

Qualifying Feature(s)	Conservation Objective	Targets
		<p>tidal-tips, drift lines, beaches, saltmarsh creeks, lakes, ponds or rivers. Foraging range max 37km, mean max. 33.81km, mean 8.67km.</p> <p>Barriers to connectivity: No significant increase. Seabirds species can make extensive use of marine waters adjacent to their breeding colonies.</p> <p>Foraging range: max. 37km , mean max 33.81km , mean 8.67km (BirdLife International Seabird Database 2014).</p> <p>Disturbance at the level of impact breeding site: Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the breeding common tern population. In the Cork Harbour area, this species largely breeds on artificial structures (see Wilson et al., 2000 and RPS, 2014).</p>
Wetlands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetland habitats in Cork Harbour SPA, as a resource for the regularly – occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.	Habitats Area: The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of 2,587 hectares, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation. The wetland habitat area was estimated as 2,587ha using OSI data and relevant orthophotographs.

NPWS (2014) Conservation Objectives for Cork Harbour SPA {4030}. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

The intertidal mudflats in the Glounthaune Estuary which is located to the south of the proposed cycleway supports high numbers of a range of species of waterbird species including most of the species which are qualifying interest species of the Cork Harbour SPA including Little Grebe, Grey Heron, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull.. The estuary supports a number of important waterbird roost sites (ref Aecom drawing No: 20181122_Fig2_Known SCI Wintering_Bird_Roosts)

Site trends for the following species which are qualifying interests of the SPA are *Highly Unfavourable*: Pintail, Shoveler, Red-breasted Merganser, Cormorant, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Site trends for the following species which are qualifying interests of the SPA are *Unfavourable*: Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Grey Heron, Great Crested Grebe, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Dunlin, Redshank.

Site trends for the following species which are qualifying interests of the SPA are *Favourable*: Little Grebe, Golden Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit.

Identification of Potential Impacts on Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA

Taking account of the targets set out for each of the above sites, activities resulting in

- direct removal of wetland habitats within the SAC or SPA;
- changes in distribution of marine invertebrate communities;
- changes to natural hydrological processes in the harbour:
- changes to natural sedimentation patterns in the harbour:
- spread of invasive species (*Spartina anglica*);
- the loss of the availability or decline in quality of feeding or roosting habitat of waterbird species;
- the loss of availability or decline in quality of breeding, feeding and roosting habitat of Common Tern; and/or
- significant disturbance to waterbirds or terns

could have the potential to interfere with the achievement of the conservation objectives which have been set for the Great Island Channel SAC and/or the Cork Harbour SPA.

Screening Assessment

There will be no direct intervention within the SAC or the SPA, and therefore no direct loss of habitat within the SAC or the SPA will arise as a result of this project.

Risk of activities associated with the project giving rise to negative effects on natural hydrological processes or patterns of sedimentation deposition can also be ruled out, as there will be no increase in rates or volumes of surface water run-off arising from the proposed development.

There is also no risk that the project will exacerbate the spread of *Spartina anglica* within the SAC as no interventions are proposed within either the SAC or the SPA.

The primary considerations for this project are identified to be the following:

- risk of the project giving rise to deterioration of estuarine habitats, and thereby on their dependant marine communities, including invertebrate and bird communities. This risk is associated with the potential risk of release of toxic contaminants to surface water particularly associated with construction related activities; and
- risk of the activities associated with the project causing significant disturbance to birds.

Water Quality: Activities associated with the construction of the new cycleway / pathway could have the potential to give rise to the release of toxic contaminants and/or sediments to water courses linked to Cork Harbour and its associated European sites. Works at watercourses with a direct linkage to the harbour are identified to be most sensitive.

The accidental release of toxic contaminants including fuels and/or cementitious materials could have negative effects on marine invertebrate communities and vegetation communities associated with intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh areas, were any such releases of significant scale. The intertidal habitats in the adjacent sections of the SAC and SPA are naturally silty environments, therefore run-off of suspended solids will not have adverse impacts on habitats, or the species that they support, other than if they were at a very significant scale.

However, activities associated with the construction of the cycleway are assessed to be at low risk of causing significant releases of pollutants to water for the following reasons:

- the majority of works are to be located in existing road carriageway;
- the existing surface water drainage arrangements along the route involve discharges of surface water to ground;
- no direct discharges to watercourses are proposed;
- no refuelling of plant or machinery within the footprint of the development is proposed;
- no instream works are proposed;
- the two proposed water-crossing structures will be pre-cast and there will be no requirement to mix cementitious material on site; and
- while there is some risk of release of sediments to watercourses at the proposed new water crossing sites during the construction phase, any such release could only be of a small scale, taking account of the nature of the works proposed. As intertidal habitats in the adjacent sections of the SAC and SPA are naturally silty environments, small scale run-off of sediments will not negatively impact habitats, or the species that they support.

Disturbance to Birds: While the Glounthaune Estuary supports significant numbers of a range of species which are qualifying interests of the Cork Harbour SPA, the potential for activities associated with either the construction of cycleway/path, or with its ongoing use, to give rise to disturbance related impacts to birds is ruled out for the following reasons:

- there is a sufficient separation distance and the route is sufficiently well screened from the estuary by treelines and hedgerows, to be satisfied that activities associated with both proposed the construction and operation of cycleway do not pose a risk of causing any visual disturbance to birds using the estuary;
- no works (eg piling) which could generate significant noise above already occurring background levels are required during the construction phase, therefore no noise related disturbance to birds are predicted; and
- the use of the cycleway and walkway in the post construction phase will not generate any additional noise which could have the potential to cause disturbance to birds.

Cumulative Effects

This assessment has concluded that the proposed development will give rise to negligible impacts on water quality, and no disturbance related impacts to birds. The project cannot therefore contribute to negative effects on either the Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA, which could be significant when considered in combination with impacts on these sites that arise from other sources.

Overall Conclusion

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the objective information provided in this report, it is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed works, individually or in combination with other plans/projects are not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (Natura 2000 site). It is therefore

considered that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), is not required.

Explain how the overall conclusion that there are no significant effect on European sites was arrived at

There are two European 2000 sites within the potential zone of influence of this project. These are the Great Island Channel SAC and the Cork Harbour SPA. No other European sites have been identified which have any physical, hydrological or other ecological connectivity to this project.

No potential for impact on the Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA has been identified for the following reasons:

- There will be no direct intervention within the Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA, and therefore no direct loss of habitat within the SAC or the SPA will arise as a result of this project.
- There will be no increase in rates or volumes of surface water run-off arising from the proposed development, and therefore no risk of interference with hydrological conditions or sediment deposition patterns in the Glounthaune estuary.
- As there will be no intervention within either site, there is no risk that the project will cause or exacerbate the spread of *Spartina anglica* within the SAC.
- Activities associated with the construction of the cycleway are assessed to be at low risk of causing releases of toxic pollutants to water for the following reasons:
 - the majority of works are to be located in existing road carriageway;
 - the existing surface water drainage arrangements along the route involve discharges of surface water to ground;
 - no direct discharges to watercourses are proposed;
 - no refuelling of plant or machinery within the footprint of the development is proposed;
 - no instream works are proposed;
 - the two proposed water-crossing structures will be pre-cast and there will be no requirement to mix cementitious material on site; and
 - there is some risk of release of sediments to watercourses at the proposed new water crossing sites during the construction phase. However, any such release could only be of a small scale, taking account of the nature of the works proposed. As intertidal habitats in the adjacent sections of the SAC and SPA are naturally silty environments, small scale run-off of sediments will not negatively impact habitats, or the species that they support.
- Activities associated with either the construction of cycleway/path, or with its ongoing use, are assessed to have no potential to cause significant negative impacts on species of bird which are qualifying interests of the Cork Harbour SPA for the following reasons:
 - there is a sufficient separation distance, and the route is sufficiently well screened from the estuary by treelines and hedgerows to be satisfied that activities associated with both proposed the construction and operation of cycleway do not pose a risk of causing any visual disturbance to birds using the estuary;

- no works which could generate significant noise above already occurring background levels are required during the construction phase, therefore no noise related disturbance to birds are predicted;
- the use of the cycleway and walkway in the post construction phase is not predicted to generate any additional noise which could have the potential to cause disturbance to birds.

List of agencies consulted

Plans and particulars of the proposed development will be issued to the following consultees:

- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Heritage Council;
- An Taisce;
- Arts Council;
- Fáilte Ireland
- Irish Water;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- EPA;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland;
- National Transport Authority; and
- Cork City Council.

and will be available for inspection for a period of **4 weeks**, at the following venues and times: -

- Cork County Council's website at www.corkcoco.ie/traffic-transport/statutory-processes
- Lobby, Floor 11, County Hall, Cork between the hours of 09:00 and 17:00. The documents can be purchased for a fee of €15.00 per set at this location.
- Cork County Council Area Engineer's Offices at Ballinaglanna, Glanmire and Townhall Cobh, Co. Cork between the hours of 09:00 and 17:00 on each working day during which the said offices are opened for the transaction of business, for a period beginning on **Friday 10th January 2020** and ending on **Monday 10th February 2020**.

Submissions and observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development would be situated, may be made by email to trafficandtransport@corkcoco.ie , using the 'submissions template' on the Corkcoco.ie web page referenced above or in writing to Senior Engineer, Cork County Council, Traffic and Transportation, Floor 11, County Hall, Cork, **on or before Monday 24th February 2020**.

Who carried out this assessment

The assessment was completed by Cork County Council Ecologist, Sharon Casey.

Sources of data

Regard was had to NPWS European Site Data, in particular data relating to the Great Island Channel SAC and the Cork Harbour SPA, the Aecom Report – Report to inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and the project drawings in the completion of this assessment.

Level of assessment completed

Screening.

Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?

Strategic Cycle Corridor, Bury’s Bridge to Carrigtwohill - Part 8 Documents Package.