

Waterways Ireland

Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030

Post-Consultation Screening for Appropriate Assessment

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) on behalf of Waterways Ireland (WI) in connection with the draft Heritage and Biodiversity Plan (hereafter referred to as the ‘draft Plan’). The draft Plan was subject to public consultation in 2024 and as a result of the responses received, minor changes to the draft Plan has occurred. This Screening for AA report considers those changes and the draft Plan and whether the potential for likely significant effects exists.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that any plan or project, which is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site, but would be likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, should be subject to an AA.

1.2 Report Aim

This AA Screening Report has been prepared to provide information for the ‘public authority’¹ regarding the potential for ‘Likely Significant Effects’ (LSE) of the draft Plan, on European sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the draft Plan.

The draft Plan covers two jurisdictions, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This AA Screening report applies to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland jurisdictions for respective Habitat Regulations.

Following the exit of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland from the European Union in 2019, the Natura 2000 site network, which is the network of protected sites across the European Union, is now referred to as the UK National Site Network. For the purposes of this report, all sites that form part of the Natura 2000 site network (in Republic of Ireland) and the UK National Site Network (Northern Ireland) shall be collectively known as ‘European sites’.

The potential for likely significant effects on all European sites, across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are assessed within this report respective of the Regulations in both jurisdictions.

1.3 Draft Heritage & Biodiversity Plan

The draft Heritage and Biodiversity Plan (HBP) 2030 has been designed to conserve and enhance natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland. The draft Plan will work towards sustainable, transparent and accountable management of inland navigable waterways in line with the expectations and concerns of local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders. The draft Plan includes three Objectives and twelve Key Results to deliver this draft Plan to its completion.

1.4 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) (the ‘Habitats Directive’ provides the legal protection for habitats and species, with Articles 3 to 9 providing legislation protection to the EU wide network of sites known as the Natura 2000 site network. Natura 2000 is a network of protected sites which comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (referred to as European sites within this report). SACs are protected sites designated under the Habitats Directive. They are high quality sites that contribute significantly to the conservation of a large range of habitats and species.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA whilst Article 6(4) sets out the Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and compensatory measures where Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European sites cannot be excluded.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into:

- Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended), and by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). In the context of the draft Plan, the governing legislation is principally the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No 477/2011) as amended by S.I. 293/2021 (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).; and
- Northern Irish law by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, updated following the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union in 2019, the exit regulations, the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.)(Amendment)(Northern Ireland)(EU Exit) Regulations 2019 provided for the legal continuity following Brexit (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).

For the purposes of this report, both sets of legislation will be collectively referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

Under the Habitats Regulations, prior to submitting for approval a plan that is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of either a SPA or SAC, public authorities¹ are required to consider whether the plan may have a significant effect on such a site; and where this is the case, that an AA of the LSE must be carried out.

1.5 Relationship with the SEA Directive

In the preparation of this AA Screening report, the approach has been conducted in parallel with the requirements of the SEA process (2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law). Article 3.2(b) of the SEA Directive expressly links to AA. The SEA process requires that an environmental report is prepared to accompany a draft plan for public consultation. Following the consultation period, the plan may be finalised in its issue form. To facilitate an informed assessment under both processes, it is necessary to consider both the draft and final versions of the plan.

1.6 Consultation

The draft Plan was subject to public consultation in June 2024 and ran for 15 weeks until October 2024. Feedback from a variety of stakeholders was received during this time and was reviewed and analysed. As a result, and where appropriate, amendments were made to the draft Plan. This took the form of minor text changes within the draft Plan and in particular to the Objectives and Key Results. These amendments are considered within this Screening for AA report to determine whether the potential for likely significant effects exists as a result.

1.7 Report Structure

The report is structured below:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the draft Plan;
- Section 3 outlines the AA process and provides important definitions;
- Section 4 outlines the guidance, data and methodology used to inform the assessment;
- Section 5 sets out the European sites under consideration;
- Section 6 details the assessment for effects and screening;
- Section 7 provides a summary and conclusion.

¹ As per the Habitats Regulations (SI 477/2011), “Public authority” means “(s) Waterways Ireland”. As per the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) part 7 “(7) The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.”

2. The Draft Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2030

2.1 Overview

WI have developed the draft HBP 2030 to conserve and enhance natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland. It is the second HBP to be prepared by WI. The plan is part of proactive action by WI to manage the waterways and to develop appropriate strategies for their conservation, interpretation and promotion.

The HBP will work towards sustainable, transparent and accountable management of inland navigable waterways in line with the expectations and concerns of local communities, government agencies, environmental organisations, and other stakeholders. WI has identified three different types of Waterway Heritage Assets – (1) Natural heritage, (2) Archaeological, architectural & industrial heritage and (3) Cultural heritage. This classification aids in illustrating the importance of the objectives within the draft Plan as well as to prioritise them.

2.2 Draft Plan Objectives

The draft Plan objectives have been set forward, following the Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) goal-setting framework. The OKRs are to be implemented annually through a programme of actions.

Objective 1: Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge

The three Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to the publication of data, research initiatives for heritage and biodiversity and the integration of data with decision making processes. The Objective has further identified four impact areas for the OKRs: open-source heritage and biodiversity data, informed management and investment decisions, informed decision-making and compliance, and risk reduction.

Objective 2: Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities and external partnerships, to support alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

The five Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to training audits, skill and capacity building, implementation of best practice measures, communication strategy and partnerships. The Objective has further identified four impact areas for the OKRs: internal capacity, building strategic approach to WI, custodian role and reporting on alignment with SDGs.

Objective 3: Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways. The four Key Results associated with this Objective pertains to increasing public engagement with WI, increasing support with community organisations and stakeholders, sharing digital heritage resources and feedback gathering initiatives. The Objective has further identified two impact areas for the OKRs: community groups are activated, and heritage assets are animated, and community groups are more empowered to engage with Waterways Heritage OKRs.

2.3 Geographic Area

The geographical area covered by the draft Plan is waterways under WI remit within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (shown in Figure 1 below).

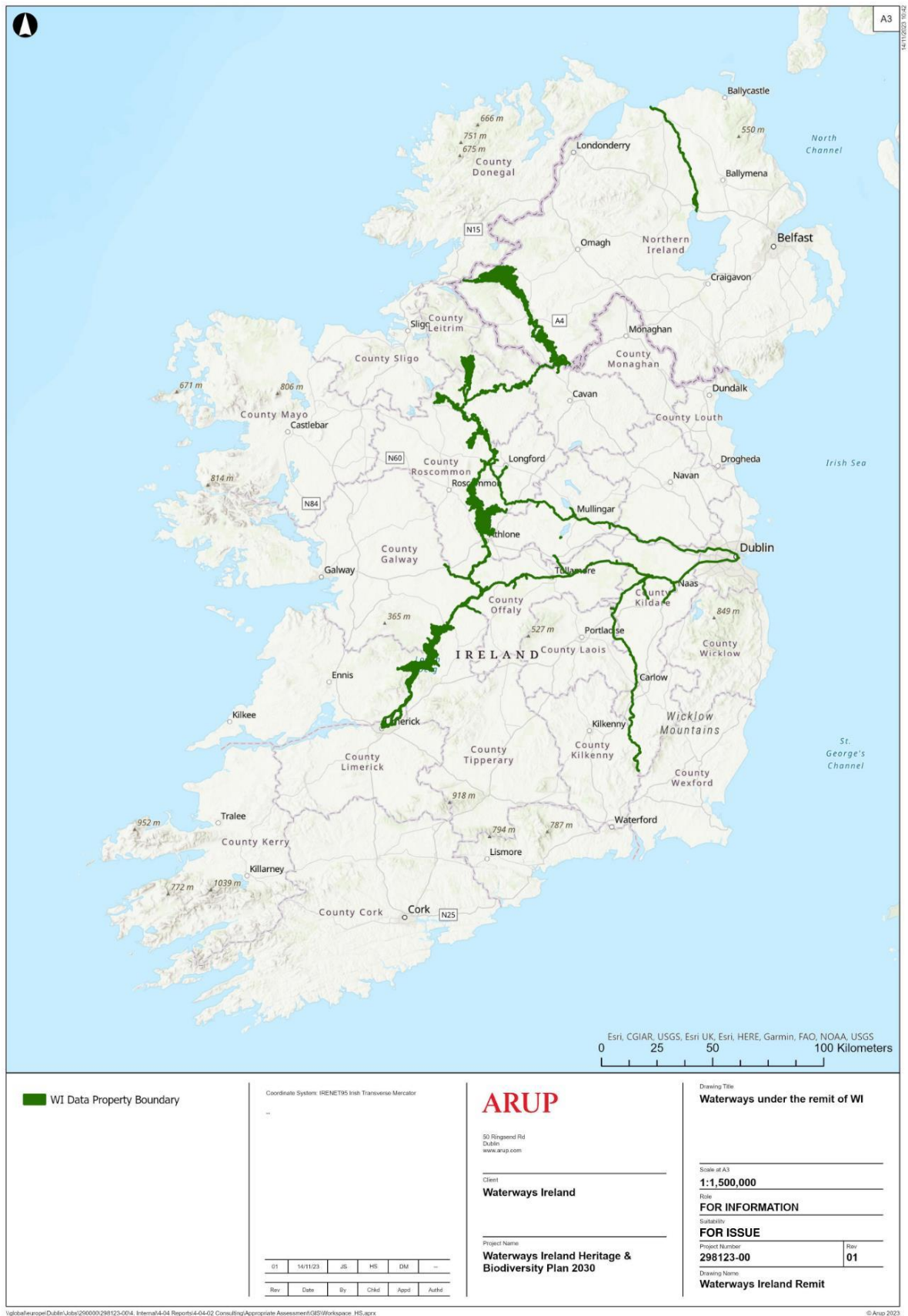


Figure 1 Waterways under WI remit in the Heritage & Biodiversity draft Plan 2030

3. Guidance, Data Sources and Methodology

3.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages

The AA process involves a number of steps and tests that need to be applied in sequential order.

An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. First of all, a plan or project must be screened to identify whether the potential for likely significant effects on a European site(s) exists. If that possibility cannot be excluded, an AA is to be undertaken prior to any consent being granted. Consent shall not be granted if it cannot be concluded that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site. Article 6(4) allows for consent to be granted in particular and exceptional circumstances, even if adverse effects may arise.

3.2 Definitions

3.2.1 European Sites

European sites, as defined under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011) (as amended) are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as SACs, candidate SACs (cSACs), SPAs or proposed SPAs (pSPAs). These are sometimes referred to as Natura 2000 sites.

SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I² habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II³ species (other than birds).

SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and all migratory birds and their habitats.

The Annex habitats and species, for which each site is selected, are termed the Qualifying Interests (QI) for SACs and termed Special Conservation Interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site.

3.2.2 Conservation Objective

Conservation Objectives (COs) for the European sites are defined for the relevant QIs and SCIs. In its most general sense, a CO is the specification of the overall target for the species and/or habitat types for which a site is designated in order for it to contribute to maintaining or reaching favourable conservation status.⁴

3.2.3 Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The Source-Pathway-Receptor model is used to assess where a potential effect may result by examining the source, its pathway and the receptor. As per guidance from the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)⁵ these can be defined as follows:

- **Source:** The origin of a potential effect which may include characteristics of a plan or project that have the potential to result in effects e.g., direct impacts such as loss of habitat;
- **Pathway:** How the potential effect may occur on the source. These are identifiable through linkages that may occur through the plan or project and European sites e.g., direct pathways such as physical proximity, hydrological connections or indirect pathways such as disturbance to migrating species; and
- **Receptor:** The European site network and respective QIs/SCIs, their ecological condition and sensitivities e.g., freshwater pearl mussel is sensitive to siltation in water.

² Annex I habitats are habitats whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

³ Annex II species are animal and plant species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

⁴ Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites (November 2012) European Commission, Doc. Hab.12-04/06. Accessed at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/commission_note/commission_note2_EN.pdf

⁵ OPR (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01

3.2.4 Zone of Influence

A ZoI within any assessment of projects and/or plans considers the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the proposed plan/project and associated activities.

3.3 Guidance

The following guidance was used in carrying out the assessment:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive; Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 20214);
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2019);
- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021); and
- Strict Protection of Animal Species Guidance for Public authorities on the Application of Articles 12 and 16 of the EU Habitats Directive to development/works undertaken by or on behalf of a Public authority (NPWS 2021).

The requirements for Screening for AA, and AA, for European sites, are set out in Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) with numerous relevant rulings and opinions issues in both Irish and EU courts. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive as transposed by the Planning and Development Act as stated within Section 1.4.

3.4 Data Sources

The ecological data reviewed to inform this report included:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Map Viewer;⁶
- EPA- Ireland's Environment. An Integrated Assessment 2020 Article 12 web tool;⁷
- NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives Series;⁸
- NPWS (2023) SAC and SPA Datasheets;⁹
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations web viewer;¹⁰
- NPWS Protected Sites in Ireland;¹¹
- NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland Web Viewer;¹²
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee UK Protected Areas¹³;
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Protected Areas web viewer¹⁴;
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report (NPWS, 2019);¹⁵
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report.¹⁶ Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O'Neil. NPWS (2019); and
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report (2019). ¹⁷ Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O'Neill (2020).

3.5 Methodology

In line with the relevant guidance and case law, this report consists of the steps outlined below:

1. **Impact Prediction:** Identify the aspects of the final Proposed MAs likely to affect the COs of European sites. The more general classification of impacts can include direct and indirect effects; short and long-term effects; construction, operational and decommissioning effects; and isolated, interactive and cumulative effects.
2. **Assessment of potential for likely significant effects:** The final Proposed MAs are assessed as to whether they are likely to result in significant effects on the integrity of European sites. This requires understanding of relevant QIs/SCIs and associated COs.

⁶ EPA Map Viewer accessed at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> accessed March 2025

⁷ Article 12 of the Birds Directive Web tool accessed at <https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/> accessed March 2025

⁸ NPWS Conservation objectives accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives> accessed March 2025

⁹ NPWS SAC and SPA Datasheets accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/designated-site-data/sac-and-spa-datasheets-downloads> accessed March 2025

¹⁰ NPWS Designations web viewer accessed at <https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8f7060450de3485fa1c1085536d477ba> accessed March 2025

¹¹ NPWS Protected sites accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites> accessed March 2025

¹² NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland web viewer accessed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1a721520030d404f899d658d5b6e159a> accessed March 2025

¹³ JNCC Protected Areas web viewer accessed at <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-protected-areas/> accessed November 2023

¹⁴ NIEA Protected Areas web viewer <https://gis.daera-ni.gov.uk/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bb721449cb8949e7a4f90c722bd2d80b> accessed November 2023

¹⁵ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland: Volume 1 Summary Overview accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf March 2025

¹⁶ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol2_Habitats_Article17.pdf March 2025

¹⁷ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol3_Species_Article17.pdf March 2025

3.5.1 Impact Prediction: Identifying the Zone of Influence

The ZoI is established using the source-pathway-receptor framework and takes into consideration the scale of the draft Plan. There is no recommended ZoI, and guidance from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) recommends that the distance should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the plan/project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects (cumulative).

For an effect to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a source (e.g., construction works at a proposed development site), a 'receptor' (e.g. QI or SCI of a European site), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g., a watercourse which connects a plan area to an SAC, ex situ foraging habitat for SCI birds). The principle for establishing ZoI, as outlined in the 2021 OPR Practice Note PN01¹⁸ applies equally to a plan level AA and so the Source / Pathway / Receptor (SPR) method has been used in this report.

The identification of the European sites within the ZoI has been carried out by utilising GIS datasets from NPWS including that of the European site network. The sites have been determined through the identification of the potential sources of the impacts of the draft Plan and their pathways for effect to European sites.

3.5.2 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Where a plan or project has the potential to undermine the COs, it must be considered as a likely significant effect upon that EU site. The assessment of effects stages determines whether the potential impacts identified using the SPR could result in a likely significant effect.

From establishing the ZoI using the SPR method, focusing on the relevant QIs and SCIs of European sites which may be at risk of likely significant effects arising from the draft Plan. The potential impacts of the draft Plan are assessed against the COs of the relevant QIs and SCIs to determine if a likely significant effect may occur as a result of implementation. Within this assessment, factors such as type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability and in-combination effects of the potential impact, as well as the vulnerability of the QIs and/or SCIs concerned⁵. Where the potential for significant effects is determined, the corresponding elements of the draft Plan are considered as adverse effects upon the integrity of European site(s). These are assessed against the COs of the relevant QIs and SCIs.

¹⁸ OPR (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01. Accessed at <https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/9729-Office-of-the-Planning-Regulator-Appropriate-Assessment-Screening-booklet-15.pdf> March 2025.

4. European Sites Under Consideration

4.1 European Site Network

The scope of the WI draft Plan has scale of application across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland due to the management of waterways both sides of the border.

No physical developments shall take place as a result of the draft Plan.

There are 441 SACs and 166 SPAs (inclusive of proposed SPAs) sites in the Republic of Ireland and there are 58 SACs, 16 SPAs, 20 Ramsar sites and two proposed SPAs (East Coast Marine SPA and Carlingford Lough proposed marine extension SPA) within Northern Ireland. Figure 3 shows the location of all SACs and SPAs across the island of Ireland.

Conservation objectives can be accessed on www.npws.ie and www.daera-ni.gov.uk and have been considered as part of the screening process, but for the purposes of brevity, these have not been reproduced.

The European site network across both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are shown below in Figure 2 European Sites in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and Ramsar sites in Northern Ireland.

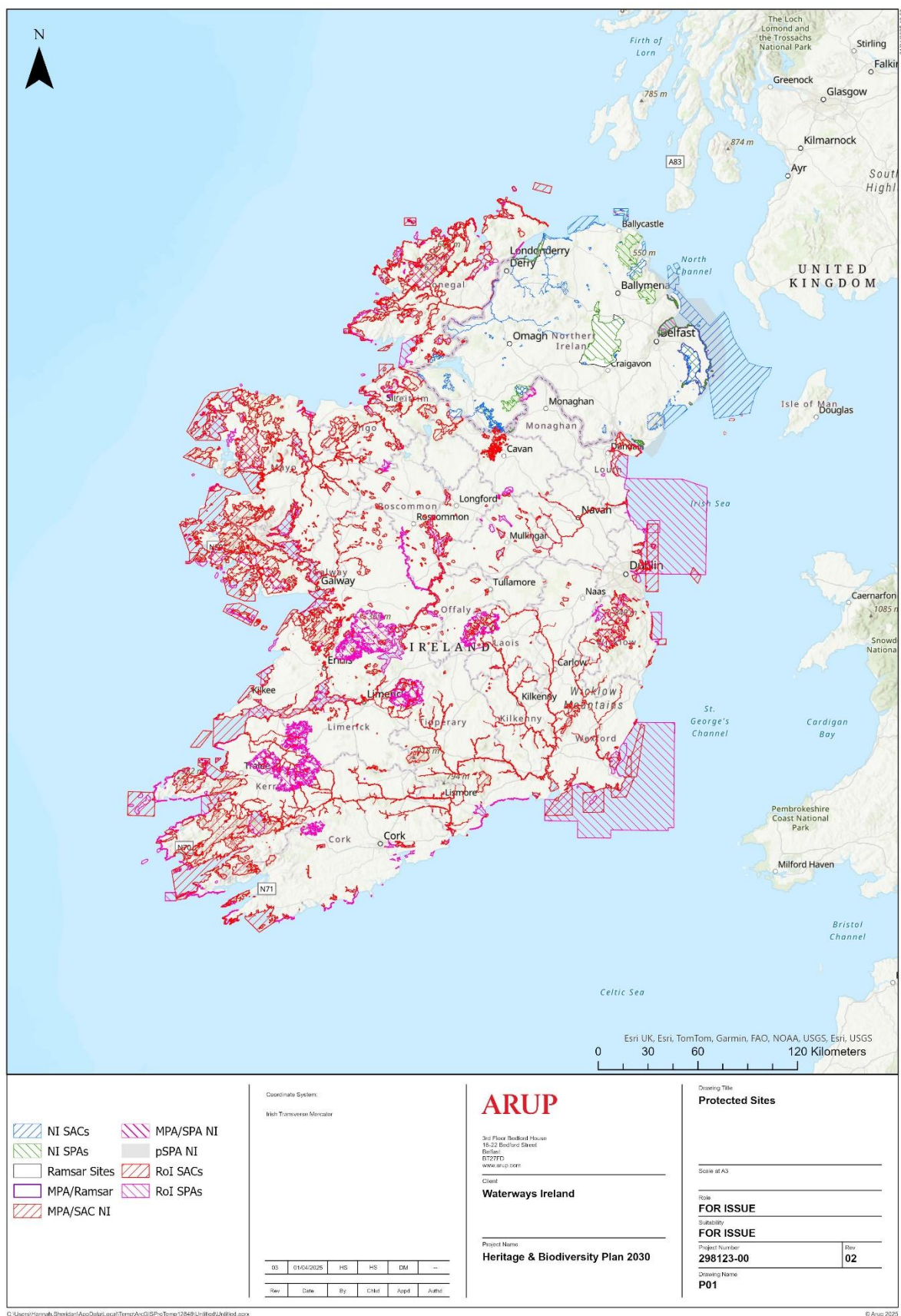


Figure 2 European Sites in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and Ramsar sites in Northern Ireland.

4.2 European Sites under Consideration

The ZoI of the draft Plan has been established through the consideration of the source-pathway-receptor method. As WI remit pertains to waterways both within the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, a hydrological pathway for effect has the potential to exist.

To establish the ZoI for the draft Plan, an initial 15km buffer from the boundary of WI's waterways was considered given the activities proposed in this plan. Due to the hydrological nature of waterways, European sites that are hydrologically connected downstream beyond the 15km buffer have also been considered as part of this assessment. Additionally, due the presence and mobility of marine mammal species¹⁹ which are qualifying interests of Marine Protected Areas in Northern Ireland, the Maidens SAC and the North Channel SAC are further considered within this assessment.

Figure 3 European and Ramsar sites within the Zone of Influence of the waterways under Waterways Ireland remit below shows the European sites within the ZoI of the draft Plan.

¹⁹ Due to the presence of mobile marine mammals, Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*), Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) and Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) which are qualifying features of SACs within certain distances are included within assessment. SACs with Grey seals and/or Harbour porpoise within 100km of the plan and SACs with Harbour seals within 50km of the plan are considered.

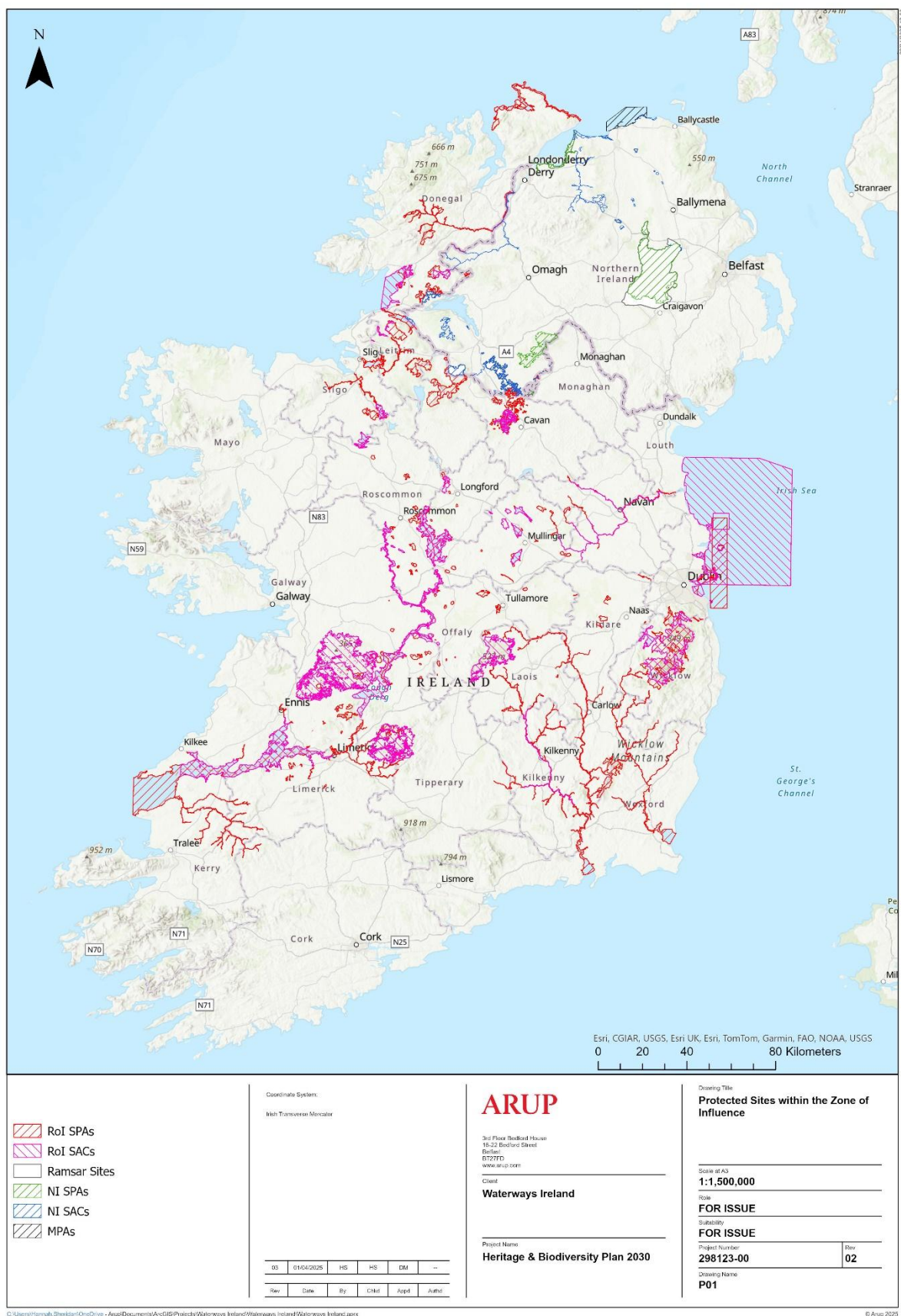


Figure 3 European and Ramsar sites within the Zone of Influence of the waterways under Waterways Ireland remit

5. Consideration of any Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European Sites

5.1 Overview

The process of screening for AA focuses on any interactions between the European site conservation objectives and the effects of implementing the draft Plan objectives.

The potential ZoI of the draft Plan would be expected to be limited to the areas shown in Figure 3 in Section 4.2. It is possible that these areas may overlap or be within proximity to European sites, through direct/indirect connectivity and possibly functionally linked land.

No physical developments are proposed within the draft Plan.

5.1.1 Screening Assessment

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of the draft Plan objectives, an assessment for likely significant effects using the Source Pathway Receptor method and a screening assessment outcome.

Table 1 Summary of Screening for AA of the draft Plan

Objective	Key Result	Source of Impact	Pathway for Effect	Receptor	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
1. Develop a solid foundation of high quality and openly accessible waterways heritage and biodiversity knowledge.		Developing a platform of high quality and openly accessible knowledge is a desk-based activity that will not result in any on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites. No sources of impact are anticipated to arise from this objective.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	1.1 Within the scope of this plan, all publishable data is made available in the year the data is collected.	This Key Result is a desk-based activity relating to publishing data on an accessible platform and will not result in any on-site activities. No on-site activities shall arise from this Key Result therefore there is no sources of impact anticipated to arise from this Key Result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	1.2 Research and knowledge gathering initiatives are progressed to underpin Waterways Ireland's role as custodians of heritage and biodiversity assets	This Key Result pertains to the dissemination of information following research and knowledge gathering initiatives. It is anticipated to relate to desk-based activities and their dissemination. No on-site activities shall arise from this Key Result therefore there is no sources of impact anticipated to arise from this Key Result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out

Objective	Key Result	Source of Impact	Pathway for Effect	Receptor	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
	1.3 Data and knowledge is integrated across Waterways Ireland decision-making processes	The incorporation of data and knowledge into decision making processes is a desk-based and communications-based activity. No on-site activities shall arise from this Key Result therefore there is no sources of impact anticipated to arise from this Key Result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
2. Ensure that Waterways Ireland's management of heritage and biodiversity is integrated across the organisation's activities and external partnerships, to support alignment with the UN SDGs		This activity pertains to Waterways Ireland's internal management and organisation to ensure that heritage and biodiversity is, primarily, at the core of the organisation's activities and partnerships and, secondly, in alignment with the UN SDGs. The activities required to carry out this objective are desk-based, with internal and external communications at its core. This objective will not result in any on-site activities and no sources of impact are anticipated to arise as a result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	2.1 A heritage and biodiversity training audit is developed for Waterways Ireland staff	A training audit is a desk-based activity that will not result in any on-site activities. No on site activities shall arise from this Key Result therefore there is no sources of impact anticipated to arise.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out

Objective	Key Result	Source of Impact	Pathway for Effect	Receptor	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
	2.2 Enhanced skills and capacity are available to Waterways Ireland and external stakeholders	Provisioning support for skills and capacity to Waterways Ireland staff and its external stakeholders is anticipated to be desk-based activities relating to upskilling and resourcing. No sources of impact are anticipated to arise from this Key Result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	2.3 Best practice delivery of heritage, biodiversity and climate initiatives and partnerships	The act of best practice in delivering this objective will not result in on-site activities. This objective will not have the potential to interact with European sites related to European sites.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	2.4 Waterways Ireland communicates on its activities, including alignment with the UN SDGs	The act of communication to ensure that Waterways Ireland's activities are in alignment with the UN SDGs pertains to communications and reporting efforts which are desk-based activities. No on site activities shall occur. Therefore, no sources of impact are anticipated to arise from this Key Results	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	2.5 Strategic partnerships are established with organisations over the life of the Plan, to benefit of heritage and biodiversity	Establishing and securing partnerships with heritage organisations relates to communications and desk-based work and will not result in on-site activities. No sources of impact are anticipated to arise from this Key Result.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out

Objective	Key Result	Source of Impact	Pathway for Effect	Receptor	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
3. Strengthen and support inspiring heritage and biodiversity experiences across our shared waterways		This Objective is a high-level and strategic objective seeking to strengthening and supporting experiences across waterways. It is anticipated that this would result in the pursuit or allocation of funding for future projects. Any project emerging from this objective, which may have a funding pathway after securing support, would need to undergo a screening for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) report. Subsequently, all activities and specific locations would be evaluated for potential significant effects.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	3.1 Increased numbers engaging with heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland	This Key Result is anticipated to be as a result of online and in-person event engagement through heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland. There is the potential that this could result in events held in-situ at Waterways Ireland locations dispersed across their estate. It is anticipated that these events would only result in localised increases of the public at specific events that would be carefully designed. It is not anticipated that such events would be of such a scale where there would be potential impacts upon the European (and/or Ramsar) site networks.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out

Objective	Key Result	Source of Impact	Pathway for Effect	Receptor	Assessment for Likely Significant Effects	Screening Assessment Outcome
	3.2 Increased support for, and engagement with, community organisations and other stakeholders promoting heritage and biodiversity initiatives	This Key Result is anticipated to be as a result of online and in-person event engagement through heritage and biodiversity initiatives delivered by Waterways Ireland to communities and other stakeholders. There is the potential that this could result in events held in-situ at Waterways Ireland locations dispersed across their estate. It is anticipated that these events would only result in localised increases of the public at specific events that would be carefully designed. It is not anticipated that such events would be of such a scale where there would be potential impacts upon the European (and/or Ramsar) site networks.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	3.3 Waterways Ireland heritage and biodiversity resources reach new audiences.	This Key Result is an aspirational target which is anticipated to be delivered online and through engagement with community organisations and other stakeholders (KR 3.2). It is not anticipated to result in any impacts in-situ to any European/Ramsar Site.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out
	3.4 Feedback and insights are gathered to inform our integrated management approach	This Key Results pertains the collection and analysis of information done in desk-study activities to provide feedback and insight. There is no risk of impacts to any European or Ramsar site arising from this KR.	Given no source of impact exists, there is no pathway for effect	Given no source of impact nor pathway for effect exists, no receptor can be identified	On the basis that the SPR method has determined that no source of impact occurs, no pathway for effect nor receptor can be identified. As a result, the potential for likely significant effects is ruled out.	Screened out

5.2 In-Combination Assessment

Following the assessment of the draft Plan, through the application of the SPR method, it has determined that no effects will occur from the implementation of the draft Plan alone. This has been determined as no sources of impact have been determined from the Objectives or Key Results of the draft Plan. Therefore, the requirement for an in-combination assessment is not warranted as no effects of the draft Plan will occur alone.

5.3 Summary of Screening Assessment

The examination of the potential for likely significant effects was carried out in cognisance of the European site network (both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), their qualifying features and the Ramsar site network (within Northern Ireland) within the ZoI.

The AA methodology and information on the European sites that have been scoped into the assessment, are provided in the Section 1.4. This methodology applies to the screening of the draft Plan. All amendments of the draft Plan Objectives and Key Results were scrutinised for the potential to give rise to likely significant effects.

Following examination of the draft Plan it was determined that the potential for likely significant effects, arising either alone or in-combination, does not exist.

6. Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The draft Plan comprises of three Objectives and twelve associated Key Results aimed at conserving and enhancing the natural, cultural and historical heritage around inland navigable waterways in Ireland.

As WI have remit over waterways in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the ZoI of the draft Plan extends over both jurisdictions. A precautionary buffer of 15km was placed on the waterways under the remit of WI to establish the ZoI. Sites beyond this buffer zone were also considered due to the hydrological pathway between the WI waterways and European and Ramsar sites.

Consistent with the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, a plan or project is subject to a Screening for AA to establish the potential for likely significant effects on the European site network. The purpose of this AA Screening report is to provide the relevant information to the public authority (Waterways Ireland) to inform subsequent screenings for AA, pursuant to the Habitats Regulations as defined in Section 1.4.

6.2 Conclusion

The Objectives and associated Key Results of the draft Plan were assessed for the potential for likely significant effects on the European site network.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the best available information, and applying the precautionary principle, it can be concluded that the possibility of any significant effects on any European sites, whether arising from the plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded, for the reasons set out in Section 5.1.1 above. In reaching this conclusion, the nature of the plan and its potential relationship with all European sites within the ZoI, and their conservation objectives, have been fully considered.

Therefore, it is the professional opinion of the authors of this report that this draft Plan does not require an AA.

