

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

FOR THE
OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2009-2015

for: Offaly County Council

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Terms of Reference	1
3	Screening Matrix	2
4	Finding of no Significant Effects Matrix	9
5	Conclusion	11

1 Introduction

This is an Appropriate Assessment Screening of the Offaly County Development Plan - in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). The relevant provisions of the Directive are set out in Section 2 of this report.

It evaluates the Plan to see if it needs to be the subject of an *appropriate assessment*. In accordance with the relevant EU Guidance, viz. *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)*¹, a "Screening matrix" and a "Finding of no significant effects matrix" have been completed. These are contained in Sections 3 and 4 respectively. Section 5 contains the conclusions of this evaluation.

2 Terms of Reference

Appropriate assessment is an assessment carried out under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

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.

¹ European Commission 2002

3 Screening Matrix

Screening matrix

Brief description of the project or plan

The Offaly County Development Plan is intended to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Offaly for a duration of six years from the date on which it is adopted.

It consists of a written statement and accompanying maps and includes policies, strategies and actions for the County.

It is envisaged that the Plan will ensure that the County develops in line with recommendations identified at a National/Regional Planning Level and that policies and objectives reflect the growth patterns which have emerged since the adoption of the previous Plan.

Brief description of the Natura 2000 sites

There are 19 designated Natura 2000 sites within the County Offaly area (see Table 1). These are mapped on page 5 of this report.

Site synopses for these Natura 2000 sites may be accessed on the National Parks and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.npws.ie/ConservationSites/>. Individual site maps are also available on this website.

Natura 2000 Sites		Qualifying Interests	
Site Name:	Site Code:	Habitat:	Species:
Charleville Wood	000571	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles	<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>
Clara Bog	000572	Bog woodland, Active raised bogs, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites),	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>
Ferbane Bog	000575	Active raised bogs, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available
Fin Lough (Offaly)	000576	Alkaline fens, Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp., Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>
Moyclare Bog	000581	Active raised bogs, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available
Raheenmore Bog	000582	Active raised bogs, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available
Sharavogue Bog	000585	Active raised bogs, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available
Ridge Road, Sw Of Rapemills	000919	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites)	Not Available
The Long Derries, Edenderry	000925	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites)	Not Available
Pilgrim's Road Esker	001776	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites)	Not Available
Lisduff Fen	002147	Alkaline fens, Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)	<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>
River Barrow And River Nore	002162	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, Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand, Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucio-Puccinellietalia maritimae), Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi), European dry heaths, Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion), Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels, Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae), Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Estuaries	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i> , <i>Lampetra planeri</i> , <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> , <i>Alosa fallax</i> , <i>Salmo salar</i> , <i>Alosa alosa</i> , <i>Lutra lutra</i> , <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> , <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> , <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> , <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> , <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>
Island Fen	002236	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands, Alkaline fens	Not Available
Dovegrove Callows	004137	Not Available	Not Available
Little River Brosna	004086	Not Available	Not Available

Callows			
River Shannon Callows	000216 and 004096	Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>), Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>), Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnus incanae, Salix alba), Limestone pavements	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Slieve Bloom Mountains	004160 and 000412	Blanket bog (*active only), Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> , Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnus incanae, Salix alba)	Not Available
Mongan Bog	004017 and 000580	Active raised bogs, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available
All Saints Bog	004103 and 000566	Bog woodland, Active raised bogs, Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuca Brometalia</i>)(*important orchid sites), Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Not Available

Table 1 Natura 2000 Sites in County Offaly and their Qualify Interests

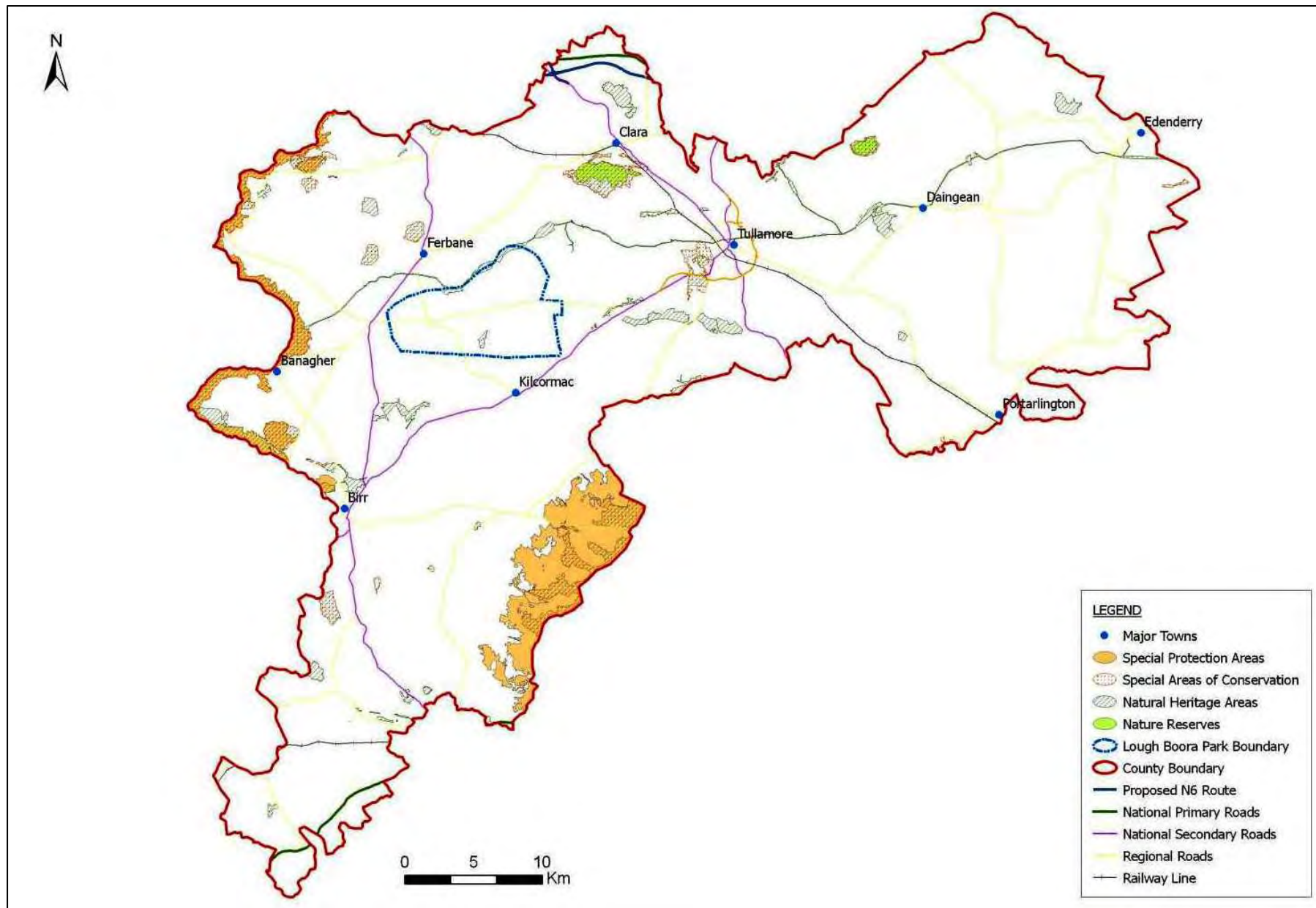


Figure 1 Designated Natura 2000 Sites in County Offaly

Assessment criteria

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.

The Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites².

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:

■ **size and scale;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **land-take;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their land take shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites or their key features., arising from their proximity shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their resource requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **emissions (disposal to land, water or air);**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their emissions (disposal to land, water or air) shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **excavation requirements;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their excavation requirements shall be

² Except as provided for in Article 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 to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **transportation requirements;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their transportation requirements shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their duration of construction, operation, decommissioning shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **other;**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

Describe any likely changes to the sites arising as a result of:

■ **reduction of habitat area:**

No projects giving rise to reduction of habitat areas for Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **disturbance to key species;**

No projects giving rise to significant disturbance to key species in Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **habitat or species fragmentation;**

No projects giving rise to significant habitat or species fragmentation of Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **reduction in species density;**

No projects giving rise to significant reduction of species density on Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in key indicators of conservation value for Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ **climate change.**

No projects giving rise to significant adverse changes in climatological conditions affecting Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:

■ interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;

No projects giving rise to significant, adverse interference with the key relationships that define the structure of Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

■ interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.

No projects giving rise to significant, adverse interference with key relationships that define the function of Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)².

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

■ loss;

Not applicable.

■ fragmentation;

Not applicable.

■ disruption;

Not applicable.

■ disturbance;

Not applicable.

■ change to key elements of the sites (e.g. water quality etc.).

Not applicable.

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.

Not applicable.

4 Finding of no Significant Effects Matrix

Finding of no significant effects report matrix

Name of project or plan

Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015

Name and location of Natura 2000 sites

As given in Screening Matrix above (see Table 1 / Figure 1).

Description of the project or plan

As given in Screening Matrix above (see page 2).

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites (provide details)?

The Plan includes, inter alia, measures to protect, conserve and manage in a prudent and sustainable manner County Offaly's natural heritage, including the nearby Natura 2000 sites, and to seek its enhancement where appropriate and feasible.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the sites (provide details)?

The Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites².

The assessment of significance of effects

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.

The Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites².

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

The policies and provisions of the Plan have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for developments that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. Furthermore, such developments as will be permitted on foot of the provisions of this Plan shall be required to conform with the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites².

List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.

Having established that Appropriate Assessment is not required, no agencies have been consulted.

Response to consultation.

Not applicable

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?

CAAS (Environmental Services) for Offaly County Council.

Sources of data

Existing Records.

Level of assessment completed

Desktop study.

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

On display with Development Plan.

5 Conclusion

Having reviewed the Plan in accordance with the *Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, a "Screening matrix" and a "Finding of no significant effects matrix" have been completed. These matrices are included in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

The principal trigger for an appropriate assessment would be if the Plan were likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site (SACs and SPAs are Natura 2000 sites). The Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites².

This screening report finds that the Plan does not require further appropriate assessment.