



# Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

for

Proposed Variation No. 1

of the

Offaly County Development Plan 2014 – 2020

December 2017



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Offaly County Council is preparing a Proposed Variation (No. 1) to the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 seeks, in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (Vacant Site Levy) to:

- (a) integrate specific objective(s) for the development and renewal of identified areas in need of regeneration or residential development and,
- (b) specify the areas identified in need of regeneration or residential development.

The proposed variation has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of section 13(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

### 1.2 Purpose of this Report

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report of the proposed variation. The purpose of this report is to evaluate whether or not the proposed variation is likely to significantly affect Natura 2000 sites (*i.e.* Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)) within or surrounding the Plan area *i.e.* County Offaly and thus require a full Natura Impact Report.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated under the EU's Habitats Directive by statutory instrument under the Habitats Regulations 1997 and the Special Protection Areas (SPA) are designated by statutory instrument under the EU's Birds Directive 1979 and so, like SACs, are of international importance.

Under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Competent Authorities are required to undertake Natura Impact Assessment (NIA) of any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

The main purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to identify the possible effects of implementing a Plan/Project on the conservation objectives and integrity of Natura 2000 sites<sup>1</sup>.

This assessment therefore examines the implications of proceeding with the proposed variation in view of the conservation objectives and qualifying interests of associated Natura 2000 sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the area of the plan or project, generally 15km. However this can vary (Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities (NPWS 2009, Revised February 2010).

### 1.3 Legislative Background

The Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna – the ‘Habitats Directive’ provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Habitats Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of interest to the EU in a favourable condition. The Directive was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, SI 94/1997.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for Plans or Projects affecting Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Natura Impact Report:

*“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”.*

Article 6(4) of the Directive deals with alternative solutions, the test of “*imperative reasons of overriding public interest*” (IROPI) and compensatory measures:

*“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”.*

In formulating the proposed variation to the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, Offaly County Council as Competent Authority must comply with the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) and the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011.

## 2. Explanation and Purpose of proposed variation No. 1

Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 seeks to incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (URHA) relating specifically to the Vacant Site Levy, Urban Renewal and Regeneration. The aforementioned provisions of URHA 2015 are proposed to be incorporated in to the development plan for the purposes of the future application of the Vacant Site Levy, in two ways:

- 1) By way of new written objectives for the development and renewal of designated residential and regeneration lands
- 2) By specifying the lands/areas which may be subject to the future application of the Vacant Site Levy.

The URHA 2015 signed into law in July 2015 has a specific focus on addressing housing supply related issues across the country. The URHA 2015 aims to incentivize urban regeneration with a view to facilitating increased activity specifically in the housing construction sector. The URHA 2015 introduced the vacant site levy as a site activation measure which is required to be integrated as part of the development planning process, to ensure that vacant or underutilized land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use.

In making provision for the Vacant Site Levy in development plans the URHA 2015 requires Planning Authorities in the first instance to incorporate mandatory objective(s) to support Urban Regeneration and also to indicate areas to which the equitable application of the levy can occur.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared taking cognisance of the following guidelines:

- Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) Appropriate Assessment Guidance for Planning Authorities (December 2009) as amended in February 2010;
- European Commission, Assessment of plans and projects affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Luxembourg, 2001);
- European Communities Managing NATURA 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6, of the 'Habitats' Directive 92 / 43 / CEE (2000).

#### 3.2 Appropriate Assessment Screening Methodology

The Appropriate Assessment process follows four stages as outlined below:

##### Stage 1 – Screening of the proposed variation

The Screening Process will identify the likely impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites of the proposed variation, either alone or in combination with other Plans and Projects and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Ultimately, this process determines whether or not a Natura Impact Report is required *i.e.* whether the proposed variation is likely to negatively affect the conservation objectives and qualifying interests of Natura 2000 sites. This will be done by examining the proposed variation and determining if there are any potential impacts on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites.

This Screening Assessment will:

- Determine whether the proposed variation is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
- Describe the proposed variation and other plans and projects that, 'in combination' have the potential to have significant effects on a European site;
- Identify the potential effects on the European site and;
- Assess the significance of any effects on the European site.

## **Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment – Natura Impact Report**

The Natura Impact Report (if required) would determine the potential impacts of the proposed variation on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites (including Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the Plan's boundary, i.e. boundary of County Offaly) and where necessary, mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects are recommended. The impacts assessed include the indirect and cumulative impacts of approving the proposed variation, considered with any current or proposed activities, developments or policies impacting on the site(s). The potential impacts of policies and objectives outside the Natura 2000 sites but that potentially may impact upon them (known as '*ex situ*' impacts) must also be included in the assessment.

## **Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions**

Stage 3 involves the examination of alternative ways of achieving the proposed variation that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site(s).

## **Stage 4 – Assessment of Compensatory Measures**

Stage 4 is an assessment of compensatory measures, where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest, it is deemed that the proposed variation should proceed.

Stage 1 and 2 above relate to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Stages 3 and 4 relate to Article 6(4).

### **3.3 Cumulative Effects**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Natura Impact Report (in accordance with the Habitats Directive) were completed during the drafting of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 which examined the cumulative impacts of the plan's policies and objectives on the environment, including Natura 2000 sites. Mitigation measures were proposed and incorporated into the 2014-2020 Plan to ensure that no negative impacts would arise from its implementation.

The Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 (as informed by the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) 2010-2022), sets the landuse and development framework within which the proposed variation is being prepared.

The proposed variation gives effect to the provisions of the URHA 2015 providing for the implementation of the vacant site levy. The application of the levy is intended to bring underutilised and vacant sites and buildings in urban areas into beneficial use for the supply of housing where there is a determined need.

The proposed variation is seeking in the first instance to integrate specific objectives for the efficient and sustainable use of urban lands and to bring them forward for residential development. Secondly the proposed variation is seeking to identify specific areas where the application of site activation measures such as the Vacant Site Levy may apply.

The additional text proposed supports and supplements existing policies and objectives in the CDP 2014-2020 that also call for the efficient and sustainable use of urban lands. No changes are proposed to landuse zoning objectives.

The proposed variation will not be in conflict with the policies or objectives of the development plan and particularly those seeking to protect, preserve and conserve environmentally sensitive areas such as the NATURA 2000 sites. The proposed would not have an influence or impact with regard to the location, nature and scale of future development on Natura 2000 sites.

It is not envisaged that the proposed variation will contribute to significant adverse effects on the environment. Therefore it is not anticipated to result in cumulative effects in combination with other plans and programmes. It is possible that some positive effects as a consequence of the variation will result in positive cumulative effects on the environment particularly in light of the achievement of existing objectives of the OCDP 2014-2020. Once the environmental protection measures within the OCDP 2014-2020 are followed, adhered to and implemented, it is predicted that the proposed variation will not compromise the quality of the receiving environment.

## **4. Appropriate Assessment Screening**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The Appropriate Assessment Screening process will determine whether the proposed variation is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives and the integrity of Natura 2000 sites within the Plan boundary (i.e. County Offaly) and also within 15km of the Plan boundary. This buffer zone was chosen as a precautionary measure to ensure that all affected Natura 2000 sites are included in this Screening Process.

The Screening Process will identify the likely impacts of the actions/objectives of the proposed variation either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and will consider whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Ultimately, this process determines whether or not a Natura Impact Report is required *i.e.* whether the proposed variation is likely to negatively affect the conservation objectives and qualifying interest of Natura 2000 sites.

### **4.2 Management of the Site**

For a plan to be 'directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site', the 'management' component must refer to management measures that are for conservation purposes, and the 'directly' element refers to measures that are solely conceived for the conservation management of a site.

Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 seeks to incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 (URHA) relating specifically to the Vacant Site Levy, Urban Renewal and Regeneration. The implementation of the Vacant Site Levy is set within the context of sustainable urban development and a shared public interest in the most efficient use of land especially in urban areas. It is considered that having and employing appropriate enabling tools and mechanisms will facilitate local authorities in achieving compact settlements and would reduce unnecessary urban sprawl in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable urban development.

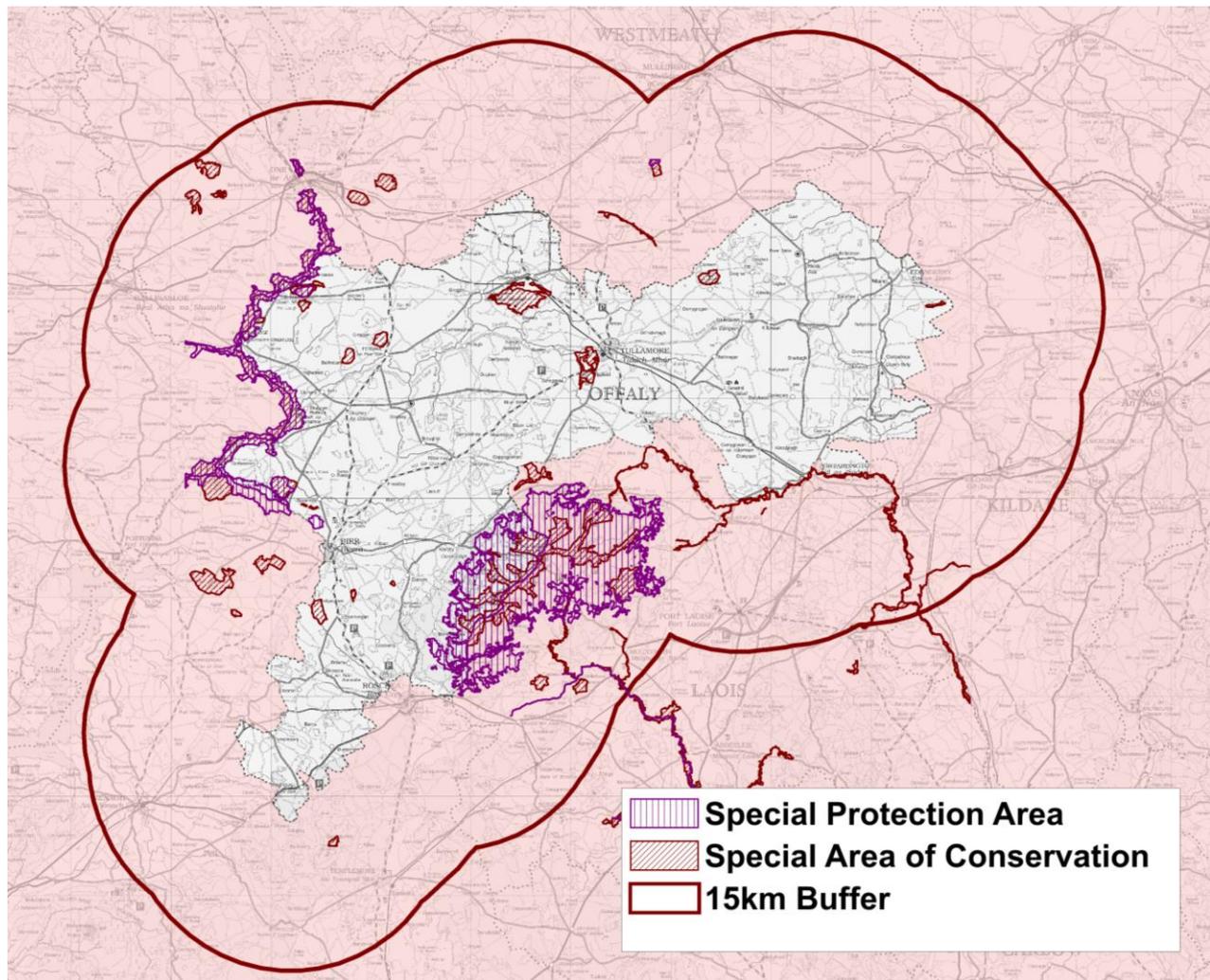
However, although not directly connected to the management of any Natura 2000 sites, the proposed variation if adopted becomes part of the Development Plan. The Offaly County Development plan 2014-2020 contains policies and objectives in Chapter 7 (Heritage and Landscape) which will directly or indirectly protect, conserve and manage areas of natural heritage, including Natura 2000 sites.

### **4.3 Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area**

The European Communities (Habitats) Directive 1992, established a network of sites throughout Europe, which are of international importance. It is comprised of Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which together are known as Natura 2000 sites. Special Protection Areas aim to protect birds and this designation

originates from the Birds Directive 1979. There is 6 SPAs and 17 SACs in the Plan area i.e. County Offaly and extends 15km outside of County Offaly (see Figure 1 below). SACs in Offaly cover certain bogs, eskers, callows and rivers. 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 in the Table 1:

**Figure 1: NATURA sites in and within 15km of the plan area.**



**Table 1: Natura 2000 Sites (SPA and SAC's) within the Development Plan Area and within 15km of the Plan Area**

| Designation                         | Site Name & Code                                    | Qualifying Interests  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Designation within Plan Area</b> |   |   |
| <b>Special Area of Conservation</b> | River Shannon Callows SAC<br>(Site Code: 00216)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</li> <li>• Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>)</li> <li>• Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>).</li> </ul> |
|                                     | Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC<br>(Site Code: 000412)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• Blanket bog (*active only)</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul>  |
|                                     | All Saints Bog and Esker SAC<br>(Site Code: 000566) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco rometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul>  |
|                                     | Charleville Wood SAC<br>(Site Code: 000571)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles</li> </ul>   |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                        | Qualifying Interests   |
|-------------|---|--|
|             | Clara Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000572)    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marsh fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>)</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> <li>• raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul> |
|             | Ferbane Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000576)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Fin Lough SAC<br>(Site Code: 000576)    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |
|             | Mongan Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000580)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Moyclare Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000581) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                                       | Qualifying Interests  |
|-------------|--|---|
|             | Raheenmore Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000582)              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>  |
|             | Sharavogue Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000585)              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion.</li> </ul>   |
|             | Ridge Mill, SW of Rapemills SAC<br>(Site Code: 000919) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> </ul>   |
|             | The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC<br>(Site Code: 000925) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> </ul>   |
|             | Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC<br>(Site Code: 001776)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> </ul>   |
|             | Lisduff Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002147)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |
|             | River Barrow and River Nore SAC<br>(Site Code: 002162) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• Freshwater pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)</li> <li>• White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)</li> <li>• Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)</li> <li>• Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)</li> <li>• River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>• Allis shad (<i>Alosa alosa</i>)</li> <li>• Twait shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>)</li> <li>• Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>• Estuaries</li> </ul> |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                      | Qualifying Interests  |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---|
|             |                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>• Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand</li> <li>• Spartina swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>)</li> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</li> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>• Killarney fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>)</li> <li>• Pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>)</li> <li>• Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation</li> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels</li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul> |
|             | Island Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002236) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |

| Designation                    | Site Name & Code                                       | Qualifying Interest  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Special Protection Area</b> | Mongan Bog SPA<br>(Site Code: 004017)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenland White-fronted Goose</li> </ul>  |
|                                | River Little Brosna Callows SPA<br>(Site Code: 004086) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)</li> <li>Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)</li> <li>Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)</li> <li>Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)</li> <li>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)</li> <li>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</li> <li>Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds</li> </ul> |
|                                | Middle Shannon Callows SPA<br>(Site Code:004096)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)</li> <li>Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)</li> <li>Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>)</li> <li>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>Wetlands &amp; &amp; Waterbirds</li> </ul>   |
|                                | All Saints Bog SPA<br>(Site Code:004103)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</li> <li>Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)</li> </ul>   |
|                                | Dovegrove Callows SPA<br>(Site Code: 004137)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</li> </ul>  |
|                                | Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA<br>(Site Code: 004160)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)</li> </ul>  |

| Designation                                 | Site Name & Code   | Qualifying Interest   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Designation within 15km of Plan Area</b> |  |   |
| <b>Special Area of Conservation</b>         | Lough Ennell SAC (Site Code: 004160)                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)</li> <li>• Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</li> <li>• Transition mires and quaking bogs</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |
|   | Bog Split Hills & Long Hill Eskers SAC (Site Code: 001831) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites)</li> </ul>   |
|   | Lough Ree SAC (Site Code: 000440)                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i></li> <li>• Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition type vegetation</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)(*important orchid sites)</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul> |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                                      | Qualifying Interest  |
|-------------|---|--|
|             | Lough Derg N-E Shore SAC<br>(Site Code: 002241)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles</li> </ul> |
|             | Redwood Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 002353)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Kilduff, Devilsbit Mountain SAC<br>(Site Code 000934) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)</li> </ul>   |
|             | Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000647)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000641)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul>   |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                                       | Qualifying Interest  |
|-------------|--|--|
|             | Liskeenan Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 001683)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> </ul>  |
|             | River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC (Site Code: 002299) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>• Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul> |
|             | Mount Hevey Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002342)             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Coolrain Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002332)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Mountmellick SAC<br>(Site Code: 002141)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> </ul>   |
|             | Ballyprior Grassland SAC (Site Code: 002256)           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul>  |
|             | Clonaslee Esker and Derry Bog SAC (Site Code: 000859)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>   |

| Designation | Site Name & Code                            | Qualifying Interest  |
|-------------|---|--|
|             | Pollardstown Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 000396) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• <i>Vertigo angustior</i></li> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> |
|             | Mouds Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002331)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Ballynafagh Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000391)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Ballynafagh Lake SAC<br>(Site Code: 001387) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |
|             | Ardgraique Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002356)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>   |
|             | Coolrain Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002332)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the</li> </ul>  |

| Designation | Site Name & Code  | Qualifying Interest   |
|-------------|---|---|
|             |   | Rhynchosporion  |
|             | Knockacoller Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002333)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul>  |
|             | Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC<br>(Site Code: 002339) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turloughs</li> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul>                             |
|             | Castlesampson Esker<br>(Site Code:001625)                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turloughs</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul>  |
|             | Bolingbrook Hill SAC<br>(Site Code: 002124)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)</li> </ul> |
|             | Ballymore Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002313)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Transition mires and quaking bogs</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul>  |
|             | Carn Park Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002336)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural</li> </ul>   |

| Designation                    | Site Name & Code  | Qualifying Interest  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
|                                |   | regeneration   |
|                                | Crosswood Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002337)                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Special Protection Area</b> | Lough Ennell SPA<br>(Site Code: 004044)                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>)</li> <li>• Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>)</li> <li>• Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)</li> <li>• Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds</li> </ul>   |
|                                | Lough Ree SPA<br>(Site Code: 004064)                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan,</li> <li>• Greenland White Fronted</li> <li>• Goose, Common Tern,</li> <li>• Golden Plover</li> </ul>   |
|                                | Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code: 004058)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Terns,</li> <li>• Whooper Swan,</li> <li>• Greenland White Fronted Goose</li> </ul>  |
|                                | River Suck Callows SPA<br>(Site Code: 004097)                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)</li> <li>• Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)</li> <li>• Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>• Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>• Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</li> <li>• Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds</li> </ul> |
|                                | Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA<br>(Site Code: 004160)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)</li> </ul>  |
|                                | Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA<br>(Site Code: 004165) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)</li> </ul>  |

#### 4.4 Conservation Objectives

Management planning for nature conservation sites has a number of aims. These include:

- To identify and evaluate the features of interest for a site;
- To set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest;
- To describe the site and its management;
- To identify issues (both positive and negative) that might influence the site;
- To set out appropriate strategies/management actions to achieve the objectives.

Generic conservation objectives have been compiled for some SACs and SPAs. These are based on the sites' qualifying features. In time, specific conservation objectives will be written for the features of interest within each Designated Site.

Overleaf outlines the conservation objectives for each Natura 2000 site.

|                                     | Natura 2000 Site                                    | Conservation Objectives  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Sites within Plan Boundary</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Special Area of Conservation</b> | River Shannon Callows SAC<br>(Site Code: 00216)     | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i></li> <li>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)</li> <li>• Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>)</li> <li>• *Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|                                     | Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC<br>(Site Code 000412)    | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• Blanket bogs (* if active only)</li> <li>• *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|                                     | All Saints Bog and Esker SAC<br>(Site Code: 000566) | <p>To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>);</li> <li>• Active raised bogs;</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration;</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion;</li> </ul>  |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                           | Conservation Objectives  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bog woodland.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Charleville Wood SAC<br>(Site Code 000571) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>;</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | Clara Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 000572)        | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Euphydrias (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i>;</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)(* important orchid sites);</li> <li>• Active raised bogs;</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration;</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion;</li> <li>• Bog woodland.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Ferbane Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 000576)      | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                       | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Fin Lough SAC<br>(Site Code 000576)    | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Mongan Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 00580)    | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Moyclare Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 000581) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                                       | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|--|---|
|  | Raheenmore Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 000582)               | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Sharavogue Bog SAC<br>(Site Code 000585)               | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Ridge Mill, SW of Rapemills SAC<br>(Site Code: 000919) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>                                   |
|  | The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC<br>(Site Code: 000925) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(*important orchid sites)</li> </ul>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                                       | Conservation Objectives  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC<br>(Site Code: 001776)        | <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)(*important orchid sites)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Lisduff Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002147)                 | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | River Barrow and River Nore SAC<br>(Site Code: 002162) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i></li> <li>• <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i></li> <li>• <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></li> <li>• <i>Lampetra planeri</i></li> <li>• <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i></li> <li>• <i>Alosa fallax</i></li> <li>• <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water)</li> </ul>   |

|                                | Natura 2000 Site                        | Conservation Objectives   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
|                                |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estuaries</li> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>• <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand</li> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i></li> <li>• Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i></li> <li>• <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|                                | Island Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002236)   | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
| <b>Special Protection Area</b> | Mongan Bog SPA<br>(Site Code: 004017)   | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|                                | River Little SPA<br>(Site Code: 004086) | <p>To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status:</p>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site   | Conservation Objectives  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan,</li> <li>• Greenland White-fronted goose,</li> <li>• Wigeon,</li> <li>• Teal,</li> <li>• Pintail,</li> <li>• Shoveler,</li> <li>• Golden Plover,</li> <li>• Lapwing,</li> <li>• Blacktailed Godwit,</li> <li>• 20,000 wintering waterbirds,</li> <li>• Black-headed Gull; Wetland &amp; Waterbirds.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | <p>Middle Shannon<br/>Callows SPA<br/>(Site Code:004096)</p> | <p>To maintain the favourable conservation status of the Special Conservation Interests of the SPA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus ) [A038]</li> <li>• Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]</li> <li>• Corncrake (Crex crex ) [A122]</li> <li>• Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]</li> <li>• Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]</li> <li>• Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]</li> <li>• Black-headed Gull (Larus ridibundus) [A179]</li> <li>• Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds [A999]</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | <p>All Saints Bog SPA<br/>(Site Code:004103)</p>             | <p>To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenland White-fronted Goose.</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the</p>   |

|   | Natura 2000 Site   | Conservation Objectives   |
|---|--|---|
|   |  | entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.  |
|   | Dovegrove Callows SPA<br>(Site Code: 004137)               | To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenland White-fronted Goose.</li> </ul>   |
|   | Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA<br>(Site Code: 004160)          | To maintain the special conservation interest for this SPA at favourable conservation status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hen Harrier</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.   |
| <b>Designation within 15km of Plan Area</b> |  |   |
| <b>Special Area of Conservation</b>         | Lough Ennell SAC (Site Code: 004160)                       | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)</li> <li>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</li> <li>Alkaline fens</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities. |
|   | Bog Split Hills & Long Hill Eskers SAC (Site Code: 001831) | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)(*important orchid sites)</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                             | Conservation Objectives  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Lough Ree SAC (Site Code: 000440)            | <p>users and relevant authorities.</p> <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Lough Derg N-E Shore SAC (Site Code: 002241) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Limestone pavements</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the</p>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site  | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|---|---|
|  |   | <p>entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | <p>Redwood Bog SAC<br/>(Site Code 002353)</p>             | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | <p>Kilduff, Devilsbit Mountain SAC (Site Code 000934)</p> | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | <p>Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC<br/>(Site Code: 000647)</p> | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul> <p>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>            |
|  | <p>Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog SAC</p>                       | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has</p>  |

|  | Natura 2000 Site  | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|---|---|
|  | (Site Code: 000641)                                       | <p>been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion Bog woodland</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | Liskeenan Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 001683)                  | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | River Boyne & River Blackwater SAC<br>(Site Code: 002299) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>• Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Mount Hevey Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002342)                | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> </ul>  |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                             | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Coolrain Bog SAC (Site Code: 002332)         | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active raised bogs</li> <li>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Mountmellick SAC (Site Code: 002141)         | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Ballyprior Grassland SAC (Site Code: 002256) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | Clonaslee Esker and                          | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                            | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|---|---|
|  | Derry Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000859)        | <p>Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Pollardstown Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 000396) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></li> <li>• <i>Vertigo angustior</i></li> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i></li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Mouds Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002331)        | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul> <p>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | Ballynafagh Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 000391)  | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                            | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|---|---|
|  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|  | Ballynafagh Lake SAC<br>(Site Code: 001387) | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i></li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | Ardgraique Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002356)   | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | Coolrain Bog SAC (Site Code: 002332)        | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the</p>  |

|  | Natura 2000 Site  | Conservation Objectives  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   | <p>entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | <p>Knockacoller Bog SAC<br/>(Site Code: 002333)</p>                     | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>  |
|  | <p>Ballynamona Bog and<br/>Corkip Lough SAC<br/>(Site Code: 002339)</p> | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turloughs</li> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</li> <li>• Bog woodland</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
|  | <p>Castlesampson Esker<br/>(Site Code:001625)</p>                       | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turloughs</li> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal</p>  |

|  | Natura 2000 Site                            | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|---|---|
|  |   | users and relevant authorities.   |
|  | Bolingbrook Hill SAC<br>(Site Code: 002124) | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco Brometalia</i>)</li> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe)</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities. |
|  | Ballymore Fen SAC<br>(Site Code: 002313)    | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> <li>• Transition mires and quaking bogs</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.   |
|  | Carn Park Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002336)    | To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.   |

|                                | Natura 2000 Site                             | Conservation Objectives   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
|                                | Crosswood Bog SAC<br>(Site Code: 002337)     | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and /or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active raised bogs</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p> |
| <b>Special Protection Area</b> | Lough Ennell SPA (Site Code: 004044)         | <p>To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>)</li> <li>• Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>)</li> <li>• Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>                                |
|                                | Lough Ree SPA (Site Code: 004064)            | <p>To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan,</li> <li>• Greenland White Fronted</li> <li>• Goose, Common Tern,</li> <li>• Golden Plover</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.</p> <p>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.</p>   |
|                                | Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code: 004058) | <p>To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Terns,</li> <li>• Whooper Swan,</li> <li>• Greenland White Fronted Goose</li> </ul> <p>To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the</p>   |

|  | Natura 2000 Site   | Conservation Objectives   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.  |
|  | River Suck Callows SPA<br>(Site Code: 004097)                | To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)</li> <li>• Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)</li> <li>• Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>• Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>• Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>)</li> <li>• Wetlands &amp; Waterbirds</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities. |
|  | Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160)               | To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.  |
|  | Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004165) | To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)</li> </ul> To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.<br>To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.  |

## 4.5 Assessment Criteria

This section assesses the likelihood of potential impacts from the proposed variation on Natura 2000 sites.

In practice and as outlined in the EU document “*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*”, and the national guidance document “*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*”, impacts that could potentially occur through the implementation of the proposed variation, can be categorised under a number of headings:

- Loss/Reduction of habitat area – *e.g.* as a result of new development sites *etc.*;
- Disturbance to key species – *e.g.* as a result of increased public access to protected sites and increased recreational pressure;
- Habitat or species fragmentation – *e.g.* through further urbanisation;
- Reduction in species density – *e.g.* transport infrastructure, land intensification *etc.*;
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as decrease in water quality and quantity *e.g.* through inadequate wastewater treatment, runoff of pollutants during construction and operational phases of development.

The Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 sets the development and landuse framework for the county. The proposed variation when adopted will become part of the development plan. A Natura Impact Report was undertaken during the course of making the development plan between (2012-2014) whereby consideration was given as to whether the Offaly County Development Plan has the potential to result in likely significant effects to the integrity and conservation status of European Sites. Having incorporated the mitigation measures as identified in the NIR into the development plan, it was considered that the adoption of the County Development Plan will not result in likely significant effects to the conservation management or integrity of European Sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

The proposed variation is not seeking to alter existing policies/objectives of the development to which it will form part. The proposed variation seeks to supplement and support existing policies/objectives relating to Renewal and Regeneration specifically in urban areas as well as providing for the activation of the Vacant Site Levy. The application of the Levy is set within the context of sustainable urban development and a shared public interest in the most efficient use of land especially in urban areas. It is considered that having and employing appropriate enabling tools and mechanisms will facilitate local authorities in achieving compact settlements and would reduce unnecessary urban sprawl in line with the principles of proper planning and sustainable urban development.

The following “protective” policies and objectives are extracted from the Offaly County Development Plan (2014-2020). They are regarded as the strategic policies and objectives for the

County and will be implemented in the proposed variation. In this way measures in the County Development Plan which set out to protect ecological networks and resources will, through the planning hierarchy, help to prevent any adverse effects on European sites (and their supporting networks) which may arise as a result of implementing the proposed variation.

## Chapter 1 Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Part V Housing Strategy

### CSP-08 Natural Heritage, Landscape and Environment

It is the policy of Offaly County Council, to support the conservation and enhancement of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas and the promotion of the development of a green/ecological network within the Plan Area, in order to support ecological functioning and connectivity, create opportunities in suitable locations for active and passive recreation and to structure and provide visual relief from the built environment. The protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European sites, will be implemented in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines, including the following (and any updated/superseding documents):

- EU Directives, including the *Habitats Directive* (92/43/EEC), the *Birds Directive* (2009/147/EC codified version of Directive), the *Environmental Impact Assessment Directive* (85/337/EEC), the *Water Framework Directive* (2000/60/EC) and the *Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (2001/42/EC).
- National legislation, including the Wildlife Act 1976, the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989 (SI No. 349 of 1989) (as amended), the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011).
- Catchment and water resource management plans, including the Shannon and Eastern River Basin District Management Plan 2009-2015.
- Biodiversity plans and guidelines, including Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016 and Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan.

## Chapter 7 – Natural Heritage:

**NHP-01** It is Council policy to prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA).

**NHP-02** It is the policy of the Council to ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, 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 European site(s), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>NHP-03</b> | It is Council policy to support and co-operate with statutory authorities and others in support of measures taken to manage proposed or designated sites in order to achieve their conservation objectives.  |
| <b>NHP-04</b> | It is Council policy to ensure that development proposals are screened to determine whether they are likely to have a significant direct, indirect or cumulative effect on the integrity or conservation objectives of any European Site and, where significant effects are likely or uncertain, there will be a requirement for consultation with the relevant environmental authorities as part of any Habitats Directive Assessment that may be required. |
| <b>NHP-08</b> | It is Council policy to protect, conserve and enhance the county's biodiversity and natural heritage including wildlife (flora and fauna), habitats, landscapes and/or landscape features of importance to wildlife or which play a key role in the conservation and management of natural resources such as water.  |
| <b>NHP-09</b> | It is Council policy to promote the protection and preservation of existing hedgerows and to encourage planting of native hedgerow species. It is also Council policy to encourage the replanting and extension of the treescape within the county (in particular mixed forests and broadleaf forests) in order to ensure the preservation and enhancement of this attractive element of County Offaly's landscape.  |
| <b>NHP-10</b> | It is Council policy to promote areas for appropriate sustainable development, primarily for recreational or educational purposes, which would not conflict with the preservation of these sites in their natural state or impact on the overall conservation objectives of European Sites.  |
| <b>NHP-11</b> | It is Council policy to conserve, protect and enhance where possible wildlife habitats such as rivers, streams, canals, lakes, and associated wetlands including reed-beds and swamps, ponds, springs, bogs, fens, trees, woodlands and scrub, hedgerows and other boundary types such as stone walls and ditches which occur outside of designated areas providing a network of habitats and corridors essential for wildlife to flourish.                  |
| <b>NHP-12</b> | It is Council policy to ensure that peatland areas, which are designated for protection under international and national legislation, are conserved and managed appropriately to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.   |

The policies, objectives and general provisions of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, have been devised and informed by the NIR to anticipate and avoid the need for development that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity and conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites. One of the strategic objectives (No. 7) of the Core Strategy is *"To ensure a high level of environmental protection in the implementation of the policies and objectives of the plan through the observance of all legal requirements with regard to Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Directive Assessment, Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive, as appropriate."*

**4.5.1 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 principal changes proposed in the variation by way of written objectives and the specification of areas, provides for the incentivised development of vacant sites in urban areas for housing and regeneration purposes. This is intended to bring underutilised and vacant sites and buildings in urban areas into beneficial use. No changes are proposed to any land use zoning objectives in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

The proposed variation when adopted will become part of the County Development Plan which provides for the protection of the environment and of designated sites within the county. The policies and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for development that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites for example the following policies:

**NHP-01** It is Council policy to prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)... and also future additions to these lists.

**NHP-02** It is the policy of the Council to ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, 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 European site(s), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Taking into account the nature of the content of the proposed variation and it's integration as part of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 when adopted (which provides for the protection of the environment and of designated sites within the county), it is considered unlikely that the proposed variation will not have significant adverse impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

**4.5.2 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:**

The proposed variation augments existing policies and objectives of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 relating specifically to urban renewal and regeneration in urban areas. No additional land will be zoned for development and will not therefore encroach further upon Natura 2000 sites. Therefore no projects, which would give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, arising from the proposed variation is anticipated.

**Size and scale**

No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments

**Land take**

Proposed variation No. 1 does not provide for changes to landuse zonings or encroachment onto areas of European sites.

**Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature of the site**

The proposed variation seeks to incentivise the development of vacant sites in urban areas for housing and regeneration purposes. This is intended to bring underutilised and vacant sites and buildings in urban areas into beneficial use. No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments.

In summary, no projects which would give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, arising from their proximity to the sites, shall be permitted on the basis of this Proposed Variation (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)<sup>2</sup>.

**Resource requirements**

No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments.

**Emissions and waste (disposal to land, water or air)**

No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments.

### Transportation requirements

No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments

The Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 to which the proposed variation will form part, sets out a clear spatial framework for development locations and landuses (with the appropriate consideration and respect given to environmental sensitive sites and locations). Where it is considered that potential developments arising (directly or indirectly) from the proposed variation (consistent with the development plan objectives) (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)<sup>2</sup>, may impact upon sensitive or designated sites, because of their proximity or scale, will be subject project level AA in keeping with the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and Section 177(v) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

#### **4.5.3 Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

##### Reduction in Habitat area, Disturbance to key species & habitat or species fragmentation, Reduction in species density, Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc), Climate change.

The proposed variation does not relate does not provide or include the zoning of any additional land for development and therefore does not involve any additional land take within Natura 2000 sites. Any projects relating to renewal or regeneration in urban areas shall be required to be consistent with the Development Plan objectives and shall be subject to a Habitats Directive Assessment, in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (DIR 92/43/EEC), where required.

The proposed variation will not give rise to a reduction in Habitat area, disturbance to key species & habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc. or climate change.

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<sup>2</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. there must be:

- (a) No alternative solution available;
- (b) Imperative reasons for overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature; and,
- (c) Adequate compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.

Offaly County Council continue to take appropriate steps to avoid reduction in species density within designated sites and areas of high ecological value in accordance with the policies and objectives set out in **Chapter 7** of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020.

#### **4.5.4 Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

##### **Interference with the key relationship that define the structure of the site**

The provisions proposed in the variation will not impact on the relationships that define the structure of Natura 2000 sites.

##### **Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site**

The provisions proposed in the variation will not impact on the relationships that define the function of Natura 2000 sites.

#### **4.5.5 Provide Indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of;**

Offaly County Council is taking appropriate steps to avoid deterioration of designated sites (through habitat/species loss, fragmentation, disturbance etc.) in accordance with the policies and objectives set out in **Chapter 7** of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 which provide for the protection of the environment and of the designated sites within the County as a whole. The proposed variation will become part of the County Development Plan.

Therefore it is considered unlikely that the proposed variation will have significant adverse impacts on any Natura 2000 sites within the Plan or outside of the Offaly County boundary.

#### **4.5.6 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.

## 4.6 Finding of No Significant Effects Report

On account of the nature of the proposed amendments, the distance from Natura 2000 sites and indirect links to Natura 2000 sites, it is not envisaged that there will be significant adverse effects on the integrity of NATURA 2000 sites. This assessment should be read in conjunction with the proposed variation and the accompanying SEA Screening Statement prepared to fulfil provisions of the SEA Directive.

### **Name of project or plan:**

Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan

### **Name and location of Natura 2000 sites:**

See **Section 4** for Natura 2000 sites within the Plan boundary and those within 15km of Plan boundary.

### **Description of the project or plan:**

See **Section 2** for the explanation and purpose of the proposed variation.

### **Is the Plan necessary to the management of Natura 2000 Sites?**

The proposed variation (and provisions therein) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites in the County.

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

It is not envisaged that any other plan or project will result in negative cumulative or in-combination effects on any of the Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed variation on account of the nature of the amendments proposed.

### **The assessment of significance of effects**

#### ***Describe how the plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site:***

It is considered that the proposed variation (alone or in combination) will not affect any Natura 2000 site(s) in a negative way, by virtue of nature of the proposed amendments.

***Explain why these effects are not considered significant:***

Proposed variation, by virtue of the amendments proposed are not considered to impact on the Natura 2000 network as no land-take, loss, fragmentation, reduction in species density or habitat reduction or fragmentation is predicted as a consequence of the proposed variation, alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Further, the natural heritage policies contained within Chapter 7 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 will ensure that no development objective will be created that will significantly adversely impact on Natura 2000 sites. The proposed variation will when adopted form part of the Offaly County Development Plan.

***List of agencies to be consulted:***

As part of the SEA Screening, the following statutory bodies will be consulted.

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG)
- Copy also sent to Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA)
- Department of Communications, Climate Change and Environment (DCCE)
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)

**Data collection to carry out the assessment*****Who carried out this assessment?***

Offaly County Council Planning Section.

***Sources of data***

Existing records and information published by the NPWS and EPA.

***Level of assessment completed***

A desktop study was completed utilising existing information from the relevant state authorities.

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

Please see public notice announcing the publication of the proposed variation.

## 5. Conclusion

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the proposed variation, has been carried out in accordance with the Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC as published by the European Commission.

The principle trigger for a Natura Impact Report would be if the proposed variation was likely to have significant effects on a NATURA 2000 site. The proposed variation seeks to incentivise the development of vacant sites in urban areas for housing and regeneration purposes. This is intended to bring underutilised and vacant sites and buildings in urban areas into beneficial use. No negative impacts are predicted from the implementation of this proposed variation due to the nature of the proposed amendments. The policies and provisions of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 to which the proposed variation will form part have been devised to anticipate and avoid the need for development that would be likely to significantly and adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites or areas of high ecological value/interest.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Natura Impact Report (in accordance with the Habitats Directive) were completed during the drafting of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 which examined the cumulative impacts of the plan's policies and objectives on the environment, including Natura 2000 sites. Mitigation measures were proposed and incorporated into the 2014-2020 Plan to ensure that no negative impacts would arise from its implementation.

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 proposed variation, does not require any further assessment (stage 2) to demonstrate compliance with the Directive.