



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING
REPORT FOR PART 8 APPLICATION**

for

38 No. Housing Units

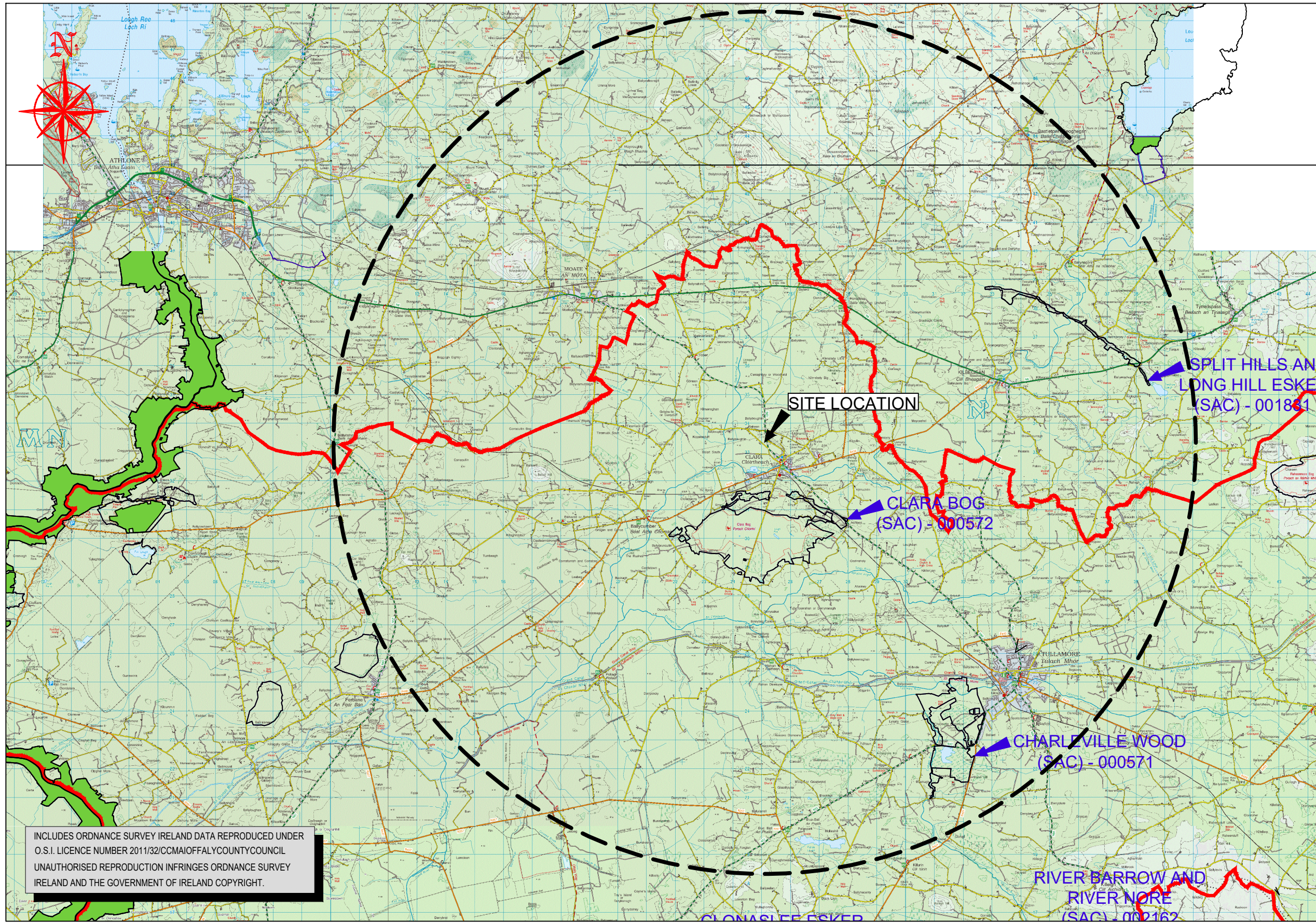
at

Raheen, Clara, Co. Offaly

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT RAHEEN, CLARA, COUNTY OFFALY

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATED SITES



INCLUDES ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND DATA REPRODUCED UNDER O.S.I. LICENCE NUMBER 2011/32/CCMA/OFFALYCOUNTYCOUNCIL. UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND AND THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND COPYRIGHT.

LEGEND

- SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)
- SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)
- 15Km BOUNDARY FROM THE SITE

NOTE:
THE SAC AND SPA DATA IS DOWNLOADED FROM THE NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (NPWS) WEBSITE(www.npws.ie) THE DATA ON THE WEBSITE IS THE LAST UPDATED ON THE 15/01/2015

DESCRIPTION	DATE	INT.	REV
Offaly County Council <small>Tel. (087) 9340900</small>			

Sharon Kennedy
Director of Services
Aras an Chontae,
Charleville Rd., Tullamore.

PROJECT
Proposed Housing Development at Raheen, Clara, Offaly

TITLE
Environmental Designated Sites

SCALE	ROAD NO N/A	PROJECT NO AA	DRAWING NO 001
NTS	DATE 28/10/20	DRAWN BY PC	CHECKED P.McD

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT FOR P8 APPLICATIONS



(A) DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND LOCAL SITE:									
Proposed development:	<p>The construction of 38 No. Housing Units at Church Street, Clara, County Offaly.</p> <p>The proposed development consists of the construction of 2No. Type A (1 Bed), 2No. Type B (1 Bed), 14No. Type C (3 Bed), 12No. Type D (Type 2Bed), 4No Type E (1 Bed), 1No. Type F (3 Bed), 1No. Type G (4 Bed), 2No. Type H (2 Bed). All internal access roadways, Public Lighting, Foul Sewers, Surface Water Sewers, Watermain's and all associated ancillary site development works.</p>								
Site location:	Raheen, Clara, County Offaly								
Site size:	1.88 ha (total site)	Floor Area of Proposed Development:	3316.41 m ²						
Identification of nearby Natura 2000 Site(s):	Charleville Wood SAC (000571) Clara Bog (000572) Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (001831)								
Distance to Natura 2000 Site(s):	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Charleville Wood SAC (000571)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- 12.45KM</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clara Bog (000572)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- 2.1 KM</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Split Hills and Long Hill Esker (SAC)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">- 13.1 KM</td> </tr> </table>			Charleville Wood SAC (000571)	- 12.45KM	Clara Bog (000572)	- 2.1 KM	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker (SAC)	- 13.1 KM
Charleville Wood SAC (000571)	- 12.45KM								
Clara Bog (000572)	- 2.1 KM								
Split Hills and Long Hill Esker (SAC)	- 13.1 KM								
The characteristics of existing, proposed or other approved plans / projects which may cause interactive / cumulative impacts with the project being assessed and which may affect the Natura 2000 site:	None								
Is the application accompanied by an EIS?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
(B) IDENTIFICATION OF THE RELEVANT NATURA 2000 SITE(S):									
The reasons for the designation of the Natura 2000 site(s):									

Charleville Wood SAC (000571) - Old Oak Woodlands, Desmoulin's Whorl Snail.

Clara Bog SAC (000572) - Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland, Raised Bog, Degraded Raised Bog, Rhynchosporion Vegetation, Bog Woodland, Marsh Fritillary.

Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (001831) - Orchard-rich Calcareous Grassland.

The conservation objectives / qualifying interests of the site and the factors that contributes to the conservation value of the site: (which are taken from the Natura 2000 site synopses and, if applicable, a Conservation Management Plan; all available on www.npws.ie) **(ATTACH INFO.)**

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and/or the Annex II species

(C) NPWS ADVICE:

Advice received from NPWS over phone:

No

Summary of advice received from NPWS in written form
(ATTACH SAME):

No

(D) ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS:

*(The purpose of this is to identify if the effect(s) identified could be significant – if **uncertain** assume the effect(s) are significant).*

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions below, then the effect is significant.
(Please justify your answer. 'Yes' / 'No' alone is insufficient)

Would there be...

... any impact on an Annex 1 habitat?
(Annex 1 habitats are listed in Appendix 1 of AA Guidance).

No - The proposed development is not located within an SPA or SAC. The closest Natura 2000 site is the Clara Bog (000572) approximately 2.1 Km to the South East of the proposed development.

... a reduction in habitat area on a Natura 2000 site?

No - The proposed development is not located within a SPA or SAC. There will be no reduction of the habitat area due to the proposed scheme.

... direct / indirect damage to the physical quality of the environment (e.g. water quality and supply, soil compaction) in the Natura 2000 site?

No- as above

... serious / ongoing disturbance to species / habitats for which the Natura 2000 site is selected (e.g. because of increased noise, illumination and human activity)?

No- as above

... direct / indirect damage to the size, characteristics or reproductive ability of populations on the Natura 2000 site?

No-as above

<p>Would the project interfere with mitigation measures put in place for other plans / projects. [Look at <i>in-combination effects</i> with completed, approved but not completed, and proposed plans / projects. Look at projects / plans within and adjacent to Natura 2000 sites and identify them]. Simply stating that there are no cumulative impacts' is insufficient.</p>	<p>No-as above</p>
<p>(E) SCREENING CONCLUSION:</p>	
<p>Screening can result in:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	<p><i>AA is not required</i> because the project is directly connected with/necessary to the nature conservation management of the site.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p><i>No potential for significant effects - AA is not required.</i></p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><i>Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain.</i> (In this situation seek a Natura Impact Statement from the applicant, or reject the project. Reject if too potentially damaging / inappropriate.</p>
<p>Therefore, does the project fall into category 1, 2 or 3 above? 2</p>	
<p>Justify why it falls into relevant category above:</p>	
<p>Proposed Housing Development is not located within SPA or SAC. Works will take place adjacent the R420 Public Road. It is considered due to the distance of the proposed development from the SAC (2.1km) that there would be unlikely significant affects to the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.</p>	
<p>Name:</p>	<p>Paul Camon</p>
<p>Position:</p>	<p>Technician</p>
<p>Date:</p>	<p>28th October 2020</p>

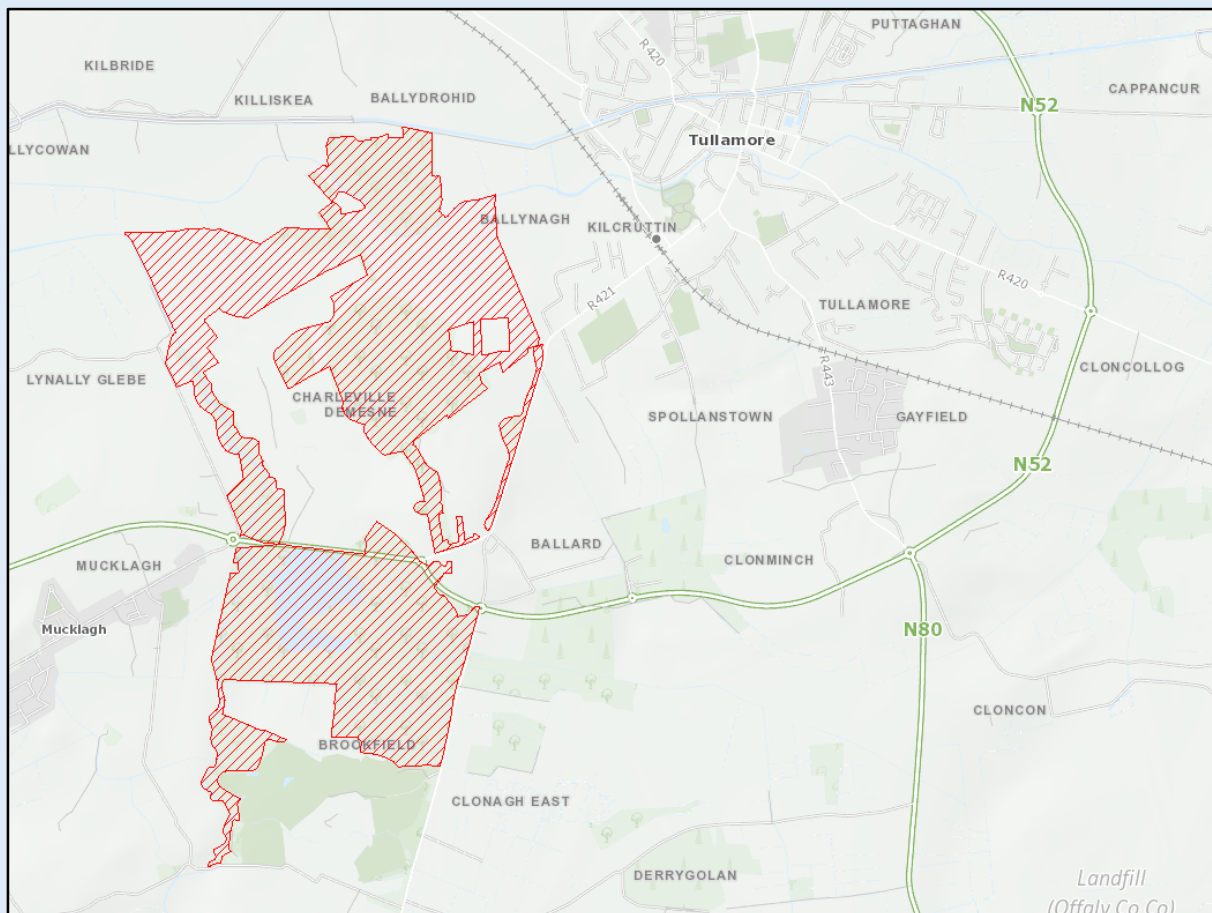


APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT for Planning Part 8 Application for 38 No. Housing Units at Raheen Clara, Co. Offaly

SITE:

Charleville Wood SAC (000571)

- Conservation Objectives
- Natura 2000 – Standard Data Form
- Site Synopsis



Conservation objectives for Charleville Wood SAC [000571]

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Objective: 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:

Code Description

91A0 Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles

* denotes a priority habitat

Code	Common Name	Scientific Name
1016	Desmoulin's Whorl Snail	<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>



Citation: NPWS (2015) Conservation objectives for Charleville Wood SAC [000571]. Generic Version 4.0. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.



NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE IE0000571
SITENAME Charleville Wood SAC

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- [7. MAP OF THE SITE](#)

1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Type B	1.2 Site code IE0000571	Back to top
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1.3 Site name

Charleville Wood SAC

1.4 First Compilation date 1995-08	1.5 Update date 2017-09
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1.6 Respondent:

Name/Organisation: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Address: 7 Ely Place, Dublin 2, Ireland
Email: datadelivery@ahg.gov.ie

Date site proposed as SCI:	1998-05
Date site confirmed as SCI:	No data
Date site designated as SAC:	No data
National legal reference of SAC designation:	No data

2. SITE LOCATION

2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

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- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Type:** p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))
- **Abundance categories (Cat.):** C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

Species					Population in the site			Motivation						
Group	CODE	Scientific Name	S	NP	Size		Unit	Cat.	Species Annex		Other categories			
					Min	Max		C R V P	IV	V	A	B	C	D
B		Cygnus olor			10	10								X
I		Elgiva sollicita						P						X
I		Hybomitra muhlfeldi						P						X
I		Mycetobia obscura						P						X
I		Parhelophilus consimilis						P						X
I		Suillia dumicola						P						X
I		Systemus scholtzi						P						X
I		Xylota abiens						P						X

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, Fu = Fungi, I = Invertebrates, L = Lichens, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **CODE:** for Birds, Annex IV and V species the code as provided in the reference portal should be used in addition to the scientific name
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting, (see [reference portal](#))
- **Cat.:** Abundance categories: C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present
- **Motivation categories:** **IV, V:** Annex Species (Habitats Directive), **A:** National Red List data; **B:** Endemics; **C:** International Conventions; **D:** other reasons

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 General site character

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Habitat class	% Cover
N14	3.0
N06	7.0
N07	7.0
N16	79.0
N23	1.0
N20	3.0
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

A large oak woodland on deep glacial deposits surrounded by estate parkland and agricultural grassland. Site includes a small lake, partially overgrown by reed swamp, with a wooded island, and a stream bordering the western site margin.

4.2 Quality and importance

Considered one of a very few ancient woodlands in Ireland, with some parts undisturbed for at least 200 years. Notable for its size and the occurrence of several rare insect species, particularly *Mycetobia obscura*. The lake attracts locally to regionally important numbers of waterfowl. The site supports a large population of the rare snail *vertigo moulinsiana*.

4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	G01		b
H	F03.02.03		i
L	F05.04		i
L	G02.09		i
L	F04		i
H	G01.02		b

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
H	B02		i
H	F03.02.04		i
H	F03.02.04		o

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification, T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

4.5 Documentation

Farrell, L. (1972). A Preliminary Report on Areas of Scientific Interest in County Offaly. Unpublished report prepared for Offaly County Council, An Foras Forbartha, Dublin. Speight, M.C.D. (1985). Adjustments to the Irish hoverfly list (Dipt., Syrphidae). *Irish Naturalists' Journal* 21: 385-391. Speight, M.C.D. (1988). *Elgiva sollicita*, *Chyromya flava* and *Paykullia maculata*: insects new to Ireland. *Irish Naturalists' Journal* 22: 415-416. Kelly, D.L. and Fuller, S. (1988). Ancient woodland in central Ireland: does it exist? In Salvitano, F. (Ed.), *Human Influence On Forest Ecosystems Development In Europe*, 363-369, ESF FERN-CNR. Pitagora Editrice, Bologna. Ashe, P. (1988). *Mycetobia obscura* Mamaev (Diptera: Anisopodidae), a species new to Ireland and a first record for the British Isles. *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* 11: 2-5.

6. SITE MANAGEMENT

6.2 Management Plan(s):

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An actual management plan does exist:

- Yes
 No, but in preparation
 No

7. MAP OF THE SITES

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INSPIRE ID:

IE.NPWS.PS.NATURA2000.SAC.IE0000571

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

Yes No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).

Site Name: Charleville Wood SAC

Site Code: 000571

Charleville Wood is a large Oak woodland surrounded by estate parkland and agricultural grassland located about 3 km south-west of Tullamore in Co. Offaly. The site, which is underlain by deep glacial deposits, includes a small lake with a wooded island, and a stream runs along the western perimeter. The woodland is considered to be one of very few ancient woodlands remaining in Ireland, with some parts undisturbed for at least 200 years.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[91A0] Old Oak Woodlands [1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)

At Charleville Wood, approximately 10% of the woodland has been under-planted with conifers and other exotic trees, but the rest of the area is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). Apart from Oak, there is much Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and scattered Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), while birch (*Betula* spp.) is a feature of the boggy margins. The shrub layer is composed largely of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The ground layer is varied, including damp flushed slopes with Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) and drier, more open areas with a moss sward composed largely of *Rhytidiadelphus triquetris*. The fungal flora of the woodland is notable for the presence of several rare Myxomycete species, namely *Hemitrichia calyculata*, *Perichaena depressa*, *Amaurochaete atra*, *Collaria arcyriionema*, *Stemonitis nigrescens* and *Diderma deplanata*.

Extensive swamps of Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) have developed in the lake shallows. The wooded island at its centre is famed for its long history of non-disturbance. Hazel, Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*) reach remarkable sizes here.

The lake is an important wildfowl habitat - it supports populations of Mute and Whooper Swan and a number of duck species, including Teal, Wigeon, Shoveler, Pochard and Tufted Duck.

A number of unusual insects have been recorded in Charleville Wood, notably *Mycetobia obscura* (Order Diptera), a species known from only one other site in Ireland. The site is also notable for the presence of a large population of the rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana*.

Charleville Wood is one of the most important ancient woodland sites in Ireland. The woodland has a varied age structure and is relatively intact with areas of both closed and open canopy, with regenerating saplings present in the latter. The understorey and ground layers are also well-represented. Old oak woodland is a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana*, is listed on Annex II of this Directive. The wetland areas, with their associated bird populations, rare insect and Myxomycete species, contribute further to the conservation significance of the site.



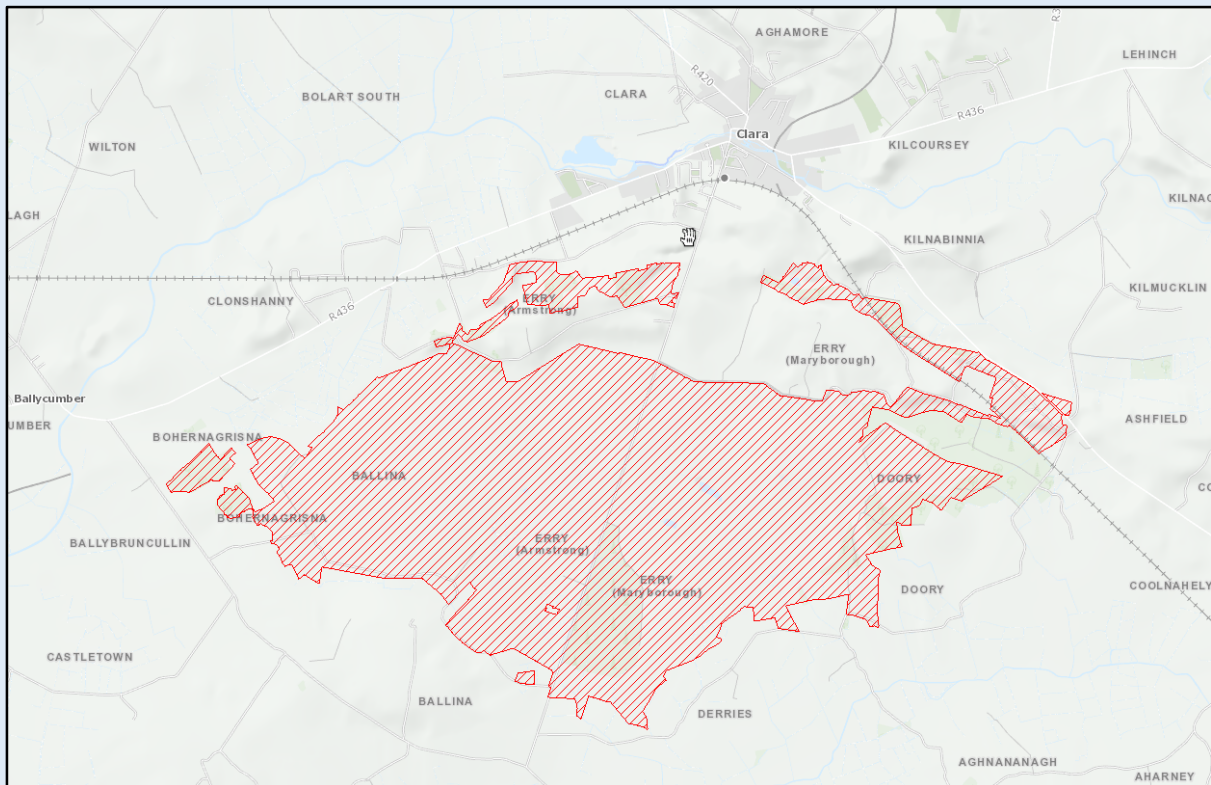
Offaly County Council
Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT for Planning Part 8 Application for 38 No. Housing Units at Raheen in Clara, Co. Offaly

SITE:

Clara Bog SAC (000572)

- Conservation Objectives
- Natura 2000 – Standard Data Form
- Site Synopsis



Conservation objectives for Clara Bog SAC [000572]

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Objective: 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:

Code	Description
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)*
7110	Active raised bogs*
7120	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration
7150	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
91D0	Bog woodland*

* denotes a priority habitat

Code	Common Name	Scientific Name
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1065 Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*

Citation: NPWS (2015) Conservation objectives for Clara Bog SAC [000572]. Generic Version 4.0.
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.



NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE IE0000572
SITENAME Clara Bog SAC

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1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Type B	1.2 Site code IE0000572	Back to top
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1.3 Site name

Clara Bog SAC

1.4 First Compilation date 1995-08	1.5 Update date 2017-09
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1.6 Respondent:

Name/Organisation: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Address: 7 Ely Place, Dublin 2, Ireland
Email: datadelivery@ahg.gov.ie

Date site proposed as SCI:	1998-05
Date site confirmed as SCI:	No data
Date site designated as SAC:	No data
National legal reference of SAC designation:	No data

2. SITE LOCATION

2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

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Longitude

-7.6277

Latitude

53.3205

2.2 Area [ha]:

836.1769625

2.3 Marine area [%]

0.0

2.4 Sitelength [km]:

0.0

2.5 Administrative region code and name**NUTS level 2 code****Region Name**

IE01	Border, Midland and Western
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2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Atlantic (%)

3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION[Back to top](#)**3.1 Habitat types present on the site and assessment for them**

Annex I Habitat types						Site assessment			
Code	PF	NP	Cover [ha]	Cave [number]	Data quality	A B C D	A B C		
						Representativity	Relative Surface	Conservation	Global
6210	X		8.37		M	C	C	B	C
7110			111.48		G	A	B	C	B
7120			61.31		G	B	C	B	B
7150			4.40475		M	B	C	B	B
91D0			8.37		M	A	B	A	A

- **PF:** for the habitat types that can have a non-priority as well as a priority form (6210, 7130, 9430) enter "X" in the column PF to indicate the priority form.
- **NP:** in case that a habitat type no longer exists in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Cover:** decimal values can be entered
- **Caves:** for habitat types 8310, 8330 (caves) enter the number of caves if estimated surface is not available.
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation)

3.2 Species referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC and listed in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC and site evaluation for them

Species			Population in the site							Site assessment				
G	Code	Scientific Name	S	NP	T	Size		Unit	Cat.	D.qual.	A B C D		A B C	
						Min	Max				Pop.	Con.	Iso.	Glo.
I	1065	Euphydryas aurinia			p				P	DD	D			
B	A098	Falco columbarius			r	1	1	i		G	C	A	C	B
B	A160	Numenius arquata			r	6	6	p	P	M	C	B	C	C

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Type:** p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))
- **Abundance categories (Cat.):** C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

Species			Population in the site						Motivation					
Group	CODE	Scientific Name	S	NP	Size		Unit	Cat.	Species Annex		Other categories			
					Min	Max		C R V P	IV	V	A	B	C	D
I		Ampedus pomorum						P						X
R		Lacerta vivipara						P					X	
B		Lagopus lagopus						P					X	
I		Lasiodiamesa sphagnicola						P						X
M		Lepus timidus hibernicus						P			X			
A		Lepus timidus hibernicus						P					X	
A		Lepus timidus hibernicus						P				X		
I		Parhelophilus consimilis						P						X

A		Rana temporaria						P					X	
A		Rana temporaria						P			X			
P		Scheuchzeria palustris						P			X			
P		Tetraplodon angustatus						P						X

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, Fu = Fungi, I = Invertebrates, L = Lichens, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **CODE:** for Birds, Annex IV and V species the code as provided in the reference portal should be used in addition to the scientific name
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting, (see [reference portal](#))
- **Cat.:** Abundance categories: C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present
- **Motivation categories:** **IV, V:** Annex Species (Habitats Directive), **A:** National Red List data; **B:** Endemics; **C:** International Conventions; **D:** other reasons

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

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4.1 General site character

Habitat class	% Cover
N23	1.0
N20	5.0
N07	60.0
N14	17.0
N22	1.0
N16	10.0
N09	3.0
N08	3.0
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

Most of the site is underlain by low permeability Waulsortian limestone. The southern section is underlain by relatively impermeable massive limestone. This bedrock is overlain by sands, gravels and boulder clays which in turn are overlain by a layer of lacustrine clay. Shell marl is seen in a few places. The peat layer developed on top of this. An esker ridge runs roughly east-west along the northern edge of the site and a till mound is seen to the south. The raised bog developed in a former lake. Part of the old cutover bog has been converted to improved pasture which is included in the site for hydrological reasons. A conifer plantation will eventually be removed.

4.2 Quality and importance

Clara Bog is a very good example of a large midland raised bog which contains examples of the Annex I habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog, bog woodland, depressions on peat substrates (Rhynchosporion) and orchid-rich calcareous grassland. One of the most unusual features of the bog is the presence of an infilling lake which supports mesotrophic fen vegetation. There is an associated soak area which is dominated by a well-developed wet birch woodland. This area of bog woodland is one of the best examples of the habitat in the country and supports a rich invertebrate flora which includes *Parhelophilus consimilis* and *Ampedus pomorum*. The moss *Tetraplodon angustatus* has its only Irish station on the bog

while it is also the last known site for the vascular plant species *Scheuchzeria palustris* (transplanted to the site and now thought to be extinct). The site also provides habitat for important bird species such as *Lagopus lagopus* and breeding *Falco columbarius*. Clara Bog has been subject to detailed hydrological and ecological studies.

4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
L	D01.01		i
L	A05.02		i
H	C01.01.01		i
M	A04.03		i
L	F04		i
H	J02.10		i
H	J02.15		i
H	C01.03		i
L	J02.10		i
L	E04.01		i
L	E03.01		i
L	A08		i
L	C01.01.01		b
L	A08		o
M	J02.10		o
H	J01.01		i

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
L	X		i

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification, T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

4.5 Documentation

Bell, J. (1991). A Study of the Hydrological Effects of a Bog Road, Clara Bog, Co. Offaly. MSc. Thesis. Department of Civil Engineering, Imperial College, London. Blackwell, I. (1992). A Hydrological Study of the Lagg Zone of Clara Bog, Co. Offaly, Ireland. MSc. Thesis, Imperial College, University of London. Bloetjes, O.A.J. and van der Meer, J.J.M. (1992). A Preliminary Stratigraphical Description of Peat Development on Clara Bog. Fysisch Geografisch en Bodemkundig Laboratorium, Universiteit van Amsterdam. Connolly, A. (1992). A Report on the Palaeoecology of Lough Roe, Clara Bog, Co. Offaly. School of Botany, University of Dublin, Trinity College. Cross, J.R. (1990). The Raised Bogs of Ireland: their Ecology, Status and Conservation. Unpublished report for the Minister of State at the Department of Finance. Stationery Office, Dublin. van der Crujisen, Grent, A. and van Wolfswinkel, R. (1993). Acrotelm Mapping on Clara Bog. Department of Water Resources. Group Hydrogeology. Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands. van Dijk, J. and Young, R. (1984). Effects of Human Influence on the Edge Vegetation of Irish Midland Raised Bogs. Unpublished Internal Report of the Hugo de Vries Laboratory, University of Amsterdam. Farrell, L. (1972). A Preliminary Report on Areas of Scientific Interest in County Offaly. Unpublished report to Offaly County Council. An Foras Forbartha, Dublin. Flynn, R. M. (1990). Clara Bog: A Hydrological Study. MSc. Thesis, University of Birmingham. Flynn, R. (1993). The Hydrogeology of Clara Bog and the Surrounding Area. A report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin. van't Hullenaar, J.W. and ten Kate, J.R. (1991). Hydrology of Clara and Raheenmore Bogs: Evapotranspiration, Storage Co-efficients, Lateral Flow in the Acrotelm, Catchment Definition and Test of the Piezometer Method for Hydraulic Conductivity. Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands. Hussey, V. (1992). Levelling on Clara Bog. A report to the Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Works. Kelly, M.L. (1993). Hydrology, Hydrochemistry and Vegetation of Two Raised Bogs in Co. Offaly. Ph.D. Thesis, School of Botany, University of Dublin, Trinity College. Kelly, M.L., Doak, M. and Dromey, M. (1995). Raised Bog Restoration Project : An Investigation into the Conservation and Restoration of Selected Raised Bog Sites in Ireland. Unpublished report to National

Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin. McAfee, D.A. (1993). A Preliminary Investigation into some of the factors that Affect the Colonisation Potential of Sphagnum cuspidatum, with Particular Reference to the Drainage Channels on Clara Bog, Co. Offaly. Unpublished B.A. (Mod.) Thesis, School of Botany, Trinity College, Dublin. O'Neill, B.J. (1992). The Design of a Walkway for Clara Bog, Co. Offaly. BAI Thesis, Trinity College, Dublin. Reynolds, J.D. (1985). Some Invertebrates of Lough Roe, Co. Offaly: a rare and endangered habitat. Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society. 9 : 41-45. Riysdijk, K.F. and van der Meer, J.J.M. (1990). Lacustrine Deposits in the Areas of Clara and Raheenmore Bogs. Facies Development and Relations to Surrounding Deposits. Fysisch Geografisch en Bodemkundig Laboratorium, Universiteit van Amsterdam. Samuels, H. (1992). Drainage and Subsidence in a Raised Bog. MSc. Thesis, Imperial College, University of London. Scheffers, M.C. and van der Meer, J.J.M. (1993). An Additional Study in the Quaternary Geology of Clara Bog, Co. Offaly. Fysisch Geografisch en Bodemkundig Labortatorium, Universiteit van Amsterdam. Schouten, M.G.C. (ed.) (2002). Conservation and Restoration of Raised Bogs. Geological, Hydrological and Ecological Studies. Stationery Office, Dublin. Spijksma, J.F.M. (1993). Hydrology of Clara and Raheenmore Bog: Permeability of Raheenmore Bog and Subsidence Study of Clara Bog West. Department of Water Resources. Group Hydrogeology. Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands. van Tatenhove, F. and van der Meer, J. (1990). The Quaternary Geology of Clara and Raheenmore, Co. Offaly, Ireland. Preliminary Mapping of Superficial Deposits. Fysisch Geografisch en Bodemkundig Laboratorium, Universiteit van Amsterdam. Veldkamp, N.M. and Westein, R. (1993). Hydrology of Raheenmore Bog. A Water Balance Study. Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands.

5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS (optional)

5.1 Designation types at national and regional level:

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Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]	Code	Cover [%]
IE01	56.0				

5.2 Relation of the described site with other sites:

designated at national or regional level:

Type code	Site name	Type	Cover [%]
IE01	Clara Bog Nature Reserve	+	56.0

designated at international level:

Type	Site name	Type	Cover [%]
Other	Clara Bog Nature Reserve	+	56.0
	Clara Bog Nature Reserve	+	56.0

6. SITE MANAGEMENT

6.2 Management Plan(s):

[Back to top](#)

An actual management plan does exist:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No, but in preparation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No

7. MAP OF THE SITES

INSPIRE ID:

IE.NPWS.PS.NATURA2000.SAC.IE0000572

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

Yes No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).



Site Name: Clara Bog SAC

Site Code: 000572

Clara Bog is situated some 2 km south of Clara village in Co. Offaly. Much of it is State-owned and designated a statutory Nature Reserve.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

- | |
|---|
| [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland* |
| [7110] Raised Bog (Active)* |
| [7120] Degraded Raised Bog |
| [7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation |
| [91D0] Bog Woodland* |
| [1065] Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) |

Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Degraded raised bog corresponds to those areas of high bog where hydrology has been adversely affected by peat cutting, drainage and other land use activities, but which are capable of regeneration. The Rhynchosporion habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species: Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*).

Clara Bog has long been regarded as one of the most important raised bogs in the country, being the largest remaining example of the true midland sub-type. It has well-developed hummock and hollow complexes, and one of the few remaining soak systems. The bog vegetation at this site has been much-studied. Variations in the proportions of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and cottongrasses (*Eriophorum* spp.) have been related to ecological features such as pools, soaks and ridges.

Rhynchosporion vegetation is widespread at this site but is best developed in the wettest areas of active raised bog. This vegetation occurs along pool edges and on flats underlain by deep, wet and quaking peat. Typical plant species which have been recorded from the habitat at the site include the bog mosses *S. cuspidatum* and *S.*

auriculatum, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), White Beak-sedge, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and the nationally scarce Brown Beak-sedge.

The largest part of the uncut high bog surface is comprised of degraded raised bog. Although the areas of degraded raised bog have a relatively well-developed raised bog flora, they are affected by water loss, to varying degrees, and thus they tend to be associated with the more marginal, sloping areas of the high bog. Common vascular plant species of degraded raised bog areas include Heather, Bog Asphodel, Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Carnation Sedge. Indicator species of midland raised bog habitat, such as Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and *Sphagnum magellanicum*, are present even within areas of degraded bog, however their cover is generally low. The cover of *Sphagnum* is also low (typically < 30%) due to low water levels and perhaps other factors such as burning.

Bog woodland on Clara Bog occurs in several small stands associated with flushes on the western side of the bog, the largest of which lies to the west of Shanley's Lough. There is a good example of a wet birch (*Betula* sp.) woodland which has a diverse vegetation, and the most easterly flush has open water associated with it.

The transitions into calcareous woodland, to the east, and to the esker ridge, to the north, are contained within the site, and some excellent examples of esker grassland also occur. Some peripheral reclaimed farmland is also included in the site, because management undertaken in these areas can affect the hydrology of the bog.

Several rare invertebrate species are associated with the soak on this bog, including the midge, *Lasiodiamesa sphagnicola* (Order Diptera), for which Clara Bog is its only known Irish site, a click beetle, *Ampedus pomorum* (Order Coleoptera), and another midge, *Parhelophilus consimilis* (Order Diptera). Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*, Order Lepidoptera), a butterfly listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, is also known from the site. The bog is also important at the only known Irish station for the rare moss *Tetraplodon angustatus*.

Clara Bog supports breeding Merlin (1-2 pairs), a scarce species in Ireland and one that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Red Grouse also breeds, along with other common bogland species such as Meadow Pipit and Skylark.

The site has been divided into a western and an eastern section by a road. The eastern part of the site has been damaged by previous drainage works, although restoration work is in progress. Continuing peat extraction from the southern margins is also damaging and has a potential effect upon much of the internal bog, including the soak system. Ideally the whole bog should be managed as a hydrological unit.

Active raised bogs, once characteristic of central Ireland, are now rare and vulnerable, and have been recognised by the E.U. as habitats of international importance. Ireland has a special responsibility to conserve the best of its remaining

bogs. Further drainage, peat extraction, burning or attempted land reclamation is not consistent with this responsibility.

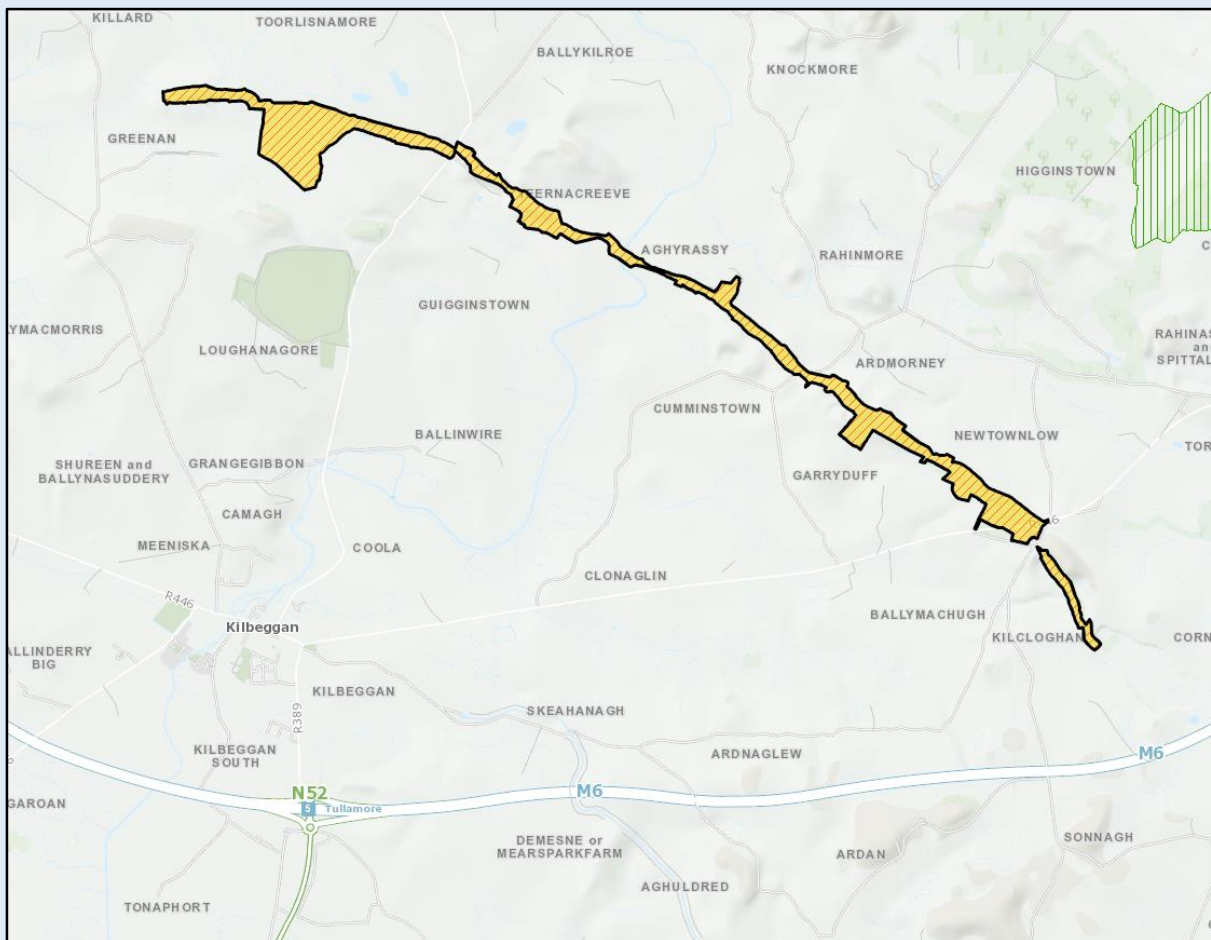


APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT for Planning Part 8 Application for 38 No. Housing Units at Raheen, Clara, Co. Offaly

SITE:

Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC (001831)

- Conservation Objectives
- Natura 2000 – Standard Data Form
- Site Synopsis





Conservation objectives for Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC [001831]

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Objective: 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:

Code	Description
------	-------------

6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)*
------	--

* denotes a priority habitat



Citation: NPWS (2015) Conservation objectives for Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC [001831].
Generic Version 4.0. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.



NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE IE0001831
SITENAME Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC

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- [1. SITE IDENTIFICATION](#)
- [2. SITE LOCATION](#)
- [3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION](#)
- [4. SITE DESCRIPTION](#)
- [6. SITE MANAGEMENT](#)
- [7. MAP OF THE SITE](#)

1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Type B	1.2 Site code IE0001831	Back to top
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1.3 Site name

Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC

1.4 First Compilation date 1995-08	1.5 Update date 2017-09
--	-----------------------------------

1.6 Respondent:

Name/Organisation: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Address: 7 Ely Place, Dublin 2, Ireland
Email: datadelivery@ahg.gov.ie

Date site proposed as SCI:	1997-11
Date site confirmed as SCI:	No data
Date site designated as SAC:	No data
National legal reference of SAC designation:	No data

2. SITE LOCATION

2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

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Longitude
-7.466729273

Latitude
53.38883428

2.2 Area [ha]:
75.22718871

2.3 Marine area [%]
0.0

2.4 Sitelength [km]:
0.0

2.5 Administrative region code and name

NUTS level 2 code **Region Name**

IE01	Border, Midland and Western
------	-----------------------------

2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Atlantic (%)

3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION

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3.1 Habitat types present on the site and assessment for them

Annex I Habitat types						Site assessment			
Code	PF	NP	Cover [ha]	Cave [number]	Data quality	A B C D	A B C		
						Representativity	Relative Surface	Conservation	Global
6210	X		6.02		M	B	C	B	B

- **PF:** for the habitat types that can have a non-priority as well as a priority form (6210, 7130, 9430) enter "X" in the column PF to indicate the priority form.
- **NP:** in case that a habitat type no longer exists in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Cover:** decimal values can be entered
- **Caves:** for habitat types 8310, 8330 (caves) enter the number of caves if estimated surface is not available.
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation)

3.2 Species referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC and listed in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC and site evaluation for them

Species					Population in the site						Site assessment			
G	Code	Scientific Name	S	NP	T	Size		Unit	Cat.	D.qual.	A B C D	A B C		
						Min	Max				Pop.	Con.	Iso.	Glo.

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Type:** p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))
- **Abundance categories (Cat.):** C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information
- **Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

Species				Population in the site				Motivation						
Group	CODE	Scientific Name	S	NP	Size		Unit	Cat.	Species Annex		Other categories			
					Min	Max		C R V P	IV	V	A	B	C	D
P		Cardamine impatiens						P			X			
P		Galeopsis angustifolia						P			X			
M		Meles meles						P			X			
M		Meles meles						P					X	
P		Sorvus hibernica						P				X		

- **Group:** A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, Fu = Fungi, I = Invertebrates, L = Lichens, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles
- **CODE:** for Birds, Annex IV and V species the code as provided in the reference portal should be used in addition to the scientific name
- **S:** in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes
- **NP:** in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)
- **Unit:** i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting, (see [reference portal](#))
- **Cat.:** Abundance categories: C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present
- **Motivation categories:** **IV, V:** Annex Species (Habitats Directive), **A:** National Red List data; **B:** Endemics; **C:** International Conventions; **D:** other reasons

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 General site character

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Habitat class	% Cover
N07	15.0
N08	5.0
N23	1.0
N10	2.0

N14	9.0
N16	51.0
N09	8.0
N22	8.0
N06	1.0
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

A linear site approximately 7km long which comprises, for the most part, an esker ridge composed of glacial sand and gravel. The main habitat is semi-natural deciduous woodland but this diverse site also contains significant areas of bog, scrub, improved and wet grasslands. Sand and gravel are extracted from three areas of the site. Roads and a river cross the site in several places.

4.2 Quality and importance

This is one of the finest wooded esker ridges remaining in the country and constitutes one of the few woodlands in the area. In places a very rich ground flora is found in the woods. This includes several scarce species, including the protected *Cardamine impatiens* which has not been recorded as a native elsewhere in Ireland. The site is very diverse and includes examples of many habitats. Species-rich calcareous grassland is found in many areas of the site. The protected plant *Galeopsis angustifolia* has been recorded from the site.

4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
M	K04.01		i
L	D01.01		i
L	A04.02.01		i
L	K02.01		i
L	A04.01.01		i

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
L	A04.02.05		i

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification,

T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

4.5 Documentation

Ó'Críodáin, C. (1992). Conservation of Grassland Sites of Scientific Interest in Ireland. A preliminary report. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin. Breen, C., Curtis, T.G.F. and Scannell, M.J.P. (1984). *Cardamine impatiens* L. in Co Westmeath (H23) - an addition to the Irish flora, *Irish Naturalists' Journal* 21:344-345. Goodwillie, R.N. (1972). A Preliminary Report on Areas of Scientific Interest in County Westmeath. Unpublished report to Westmeath County Council. An Foras Forbartha, Dublin. Cross, J.R. (1992). The distribution, character and conservation of woodlands on esker ridges in Ireland. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 92 B:1-19.

6. SITE MANAGEMENT

6.2 Management Plan(s):

[Back to top](#)

An actual management plan does exist:

Yes

No, but in preparation

No

7. MAP OF THE SITES

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INSPIRE ID:

IE.NPWS.PS.NATURA2000.SAC.IE0001831

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

Yes No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).

Site Name: Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC

Site Code: 001831

Split Hills and Long Hill Esker is a 5 km long site which crosses the main Galway-Dublin road mid-way between Kilbeggan and Tyrrellspass in Co. Westmeath. It is a prominent feature on the local landscape.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland*
--

The main habitat at this site is semi-natural woodland dominated by Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and Irish Whitebeam (*Sorbus hibernica*) are other important constituents. There are very fine examples of these trees throughout the site, with some of the Hazel trees, in particular, being impressive. The ground flora is species-rich and includes Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) and other typical woodland plants. The scarce woodland grass, Wood Fescue (*Festuca altissima*), is present, and the scarce Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) has also been recorded here. The presence of Wych Elm is interesting in view of its decline due to Dutch elm disease.

Several areas of species-rich calcareous grassland occur, with typical calcicole species such as Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Mountain Everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*) and Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*). These occur on unstable old and active quarry faces, and on cleared woodland areas.

Areas of scrub with Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) occur, and regenerating Hazel scrub exists in some areas where woodland has been cleared. Other habitats in the site include a small lake and freshwater marsh with Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*).

Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress (*Cardamine impatiens*) occurs among the woodland flora at this site. It is an annual or biennial, whose populations are known to 'disappear' in some years only to 'reappear' again. The species is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, and this is its only known location in Ireland. Another legally protected species, Red Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*), occurs on more open ground on the esker.

The main threat to the esker is quarrying for sand and gravel. This activity already occurs on the site at several locations. Grazing is a critical factor affecting esker habitats, and getting a balance right is important. The presence of too many grazers causes damage to the ground vegetation in both woodlands and grasslands and prevents regeneration of woody species. However, if the grazing level is too low, grasslands are vulnerable to the encroachment of scrub at the expense of species which require open conditions. Fertiliser application, associated with agricultural improvement, also leads to a reduction in species-richness of grasslands.

Split Hill and Long Hill Esker is one of the finest and longest wooded eskers in the country. It is also one of the few woodlands in the area and a fine geomorphological feature of great scenic value. The trees are particularly well-grown and impressive, and much of the woodland has developed naturally on its steep slopes. The presence of a species-rich ground flora, which includes a rare and legally protected plant species at its only known Irish location, makes this site of great botanical and ecological importance. The site also supports some excellent examples of calcareous grassland which is rich in orchids. The increasing rarity of this habitat (due to agricultural intensification) is recognised in that it is awarded priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.