SCREENING
FOR
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR
PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS

TO THE

DRAFT PORTARLINGTON JOINT LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025-2031

for: Laois and Offaly County Councils

by: CAAS Ltd.

APRIL 2025

Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, JFL Avenue, Portlaoise, County Laois.
Offaly County Council, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, County Offaly.
CAAS Ltd., 1st Floor, 24-26 Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin.

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is Addendum I to the AA Natura Impact Report for the Draft Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan (JLAP) 2025-2031. It is a Screening for AA Report that has been prepared to assess whether or not Stage Two AA, including the preparation of a Natura Impact Report is required for the Proposed Material Alterations to the Portarlington Draft Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 (hereafter referred to as the "Draft Plan"), in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the "Habitats Directive") and the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

This report is part of the overall and ongoing AA process that is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Draft Plan (an AA Natura Impact Report has already been placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan). It will be considered, alongside other documentation prepared as part of this process, at adoption of the Plan.

The following documents have informed the preparation of this report and should be considered alongside it:

- Proposed Material Alterations to the Portarlington Draft Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031;
- AA Natura Impact Report for the Portarlington Draft Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031; and
- Portarlington Draft Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

An AA Conclusion Statement will be prepared following adoption that will include the final AA determination expected to be made at adoption of the Plan.

1.2 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as European sites (also known as Natura 2000 sites).

AA is required by the Habitats Directive, as transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). AA is an assessment of the potential for adverse or negative effects of a plan or project, in combination with other plans or projects, on the conservation objectives of a European site. These sites consist of SACs and SPAs and provide for the protection and long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

1.3 Approach

The Draft Plan was informed by a Stage 2 AA and a Natura Impact Report has been prepared to accompany it on public display. Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allows the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effect on the ecological integrity of any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects[1]. The Draft Plan and AA Natura Impact Report were placed on public display and submissions were invited.

[1] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Submissions received resulted in alterations being proposed to the Draft Plan. These alterations are the subject of this Screening for AA report.

The Screening for AA is based on best scientific knowledge and has utilised ecological and hydrological expertise. In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and grey literature[2] was conducted. This included a detailed review of the National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) website including mapping and available reports for relevant sites and in particular sensitive qualifying interests/special conservation interests described and their conservation objectives.

The ecological desktop study completed for the AA of Draft Plan and the Screening for AA for Proposed Material Alterations comprised the following elements:

- Identification of European sites within 15km of the Plan boundary with identification of potential pathways links for specific sites (if relevant) greater than 15km from the Plan boundary;
- Review of the NPWS site synopsis and conservation objectives for European sites with identification of potential pathways from the Plan area; and
- Examination of available information on protected species.

There are four main stages in the AA process as follow:

Stage One: Screening
The process that identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment
The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on European sites, then the process may end at this stage. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage Three.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions
The process that examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site.

Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain
An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. This approach aims to avoid any impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making process and avoiding such impacts. Second, the approach involves the application of mitigation measures, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If potential impacts on European sites remain, the approach requires the consideration of alternative solutions. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan/project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect(s).

The assessment of potential effects on European sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor[3] model, where, in order for an effect to be established all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the model is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance.

In the interest of this report, receptors are the ecological features that are known to be utilised by the qualifying interests or special conservation interests of a European site. A source is any identifiable element of the Plan provision that is known to interact with ecological processes. The pathways are any connections or links between the source and the receptor. This report provides information on whether

[2] Various documents where publishing, in journals for example, is not the primary activity of the producing body. Examples include: conference presentations; regulatory data; unpublished trial data; government publications; and dissertations/theses.
[3] Source(s) – e.g. pollutant run-off from proposed works; Pathway(s) – e.g. groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats; and Receptor(s) – qualifying aquatic habitats and species of European sites.

direct, indirect and cumulative adverse effects could arise from the Plan and the Proposed Material Alterations.

The AA exercise has been prepared taking into account legislation including the aforementioned legislation and guidance including the following:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009;
- "Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission 2018;
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Notice, Journal of the European Union, 2021; and
- Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021.

This evaluation has been made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which the relevant European sites have been designated.

Section 2 Description of the Draft Plan, to which the Material Alterations relate

2.1 Introduction and Content

The Draft Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan (JLAP) 2025-2031 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereafter referred to as 'the Act'). The Draft Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Portarlington, in the context of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031. The Draft Plan has also been informed by Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act.

The Proposed Material Alterations are outlined in detail in the accompanying Proposed Material Alterations document. The Alterations propose a number of text and map-based changes to the Draft Plan.

2.2 Form and Content of the Plan

The Draft Plan comprises a written statement and accompanying maps. The written statement shall take precedence over the map should any discrepancy arise. In the full interpretation of all objectives for Portarlington, it is essential that both the County Development Plans and the Draft Joint Local Area Plan are read together. Where conflicting objectives arise between the two, the objectives of the former shall take precedence. The general development management standards applicable to the Plan area are included in the County Development Plans, while policies and objectives that are specific to Portarlington are included in the Draft JLAP. The provisions from the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 identified in the SEA and AA documents accompanying the Plan are required to be complied with throughout the implementation of the Plan.

2.3 Vision Statement and associated Key Plan Policies and Objectives

The Draft Joint Local Area Plan for Portarlington is underpinned by the following Vision Statement, which is intended to guide the future growth of the town over the period 2025-2031: "To develop Portarlington as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a compact, vibrant town centre utilising locational strengths to attract employment and to promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to live, work and play, while ensuring the management of flood risk and the protection of the unique built and natural heritage".

Key Plan Policies and Objectives in relation to the delivery of the above Policies and Vision Statement:

- Objective 6.1: Support new development that will enable sustainable housing growth, employment and prosperity for Portarlington as a 'Key Service Centre' in line with the Strategic Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019), the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town) and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (designated as a Self-Sustaining Town).
- Objective 6.2: Promote and support positive placemaking and the development of sustainable communities, with an emphasis on active travel and shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities, improving permeability in the built environment, and encouraging a reduction in car dependency.
- Objective 6.3: Support and facilitate the regeneration and consolidation of the town centre, in line with the objectives of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'.
- Objective 6.4: Work in partnership with community groups for the regeneration and revitalisation of Portarlington, and to actively seek and secure funding and investment under available national and regional investment and funding programmes in line with the development strategy as set out.
- Objective 6.5: Support compact residential growth in Portarlington through the sustainable intensification, and consolidation of the town centre and in established residential areas, to meet identified housing targets and requirements.

- Objective 6.6: Monitor and manage the delivery of housing in Portarlington, in line with national, regional and county level objectives, through the development strategy in this plan and also through the development management process.
- Objective 6.7: Promote and support balanced economic development and employment growth.
- Objective 6.8: Protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, by promoting awareness and high-quality urban design and utilising relevant heritage legislation.
- Objective 6.9: Develop and improve flood mitigation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland.
- Objective 6.10: Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Portarlington.

2.4 Strategic work undertaken by the Councils to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development

Far in advance of the placing of the Draft Plan on public display, Laois and Offaly County Councils undertook various works in order to inform the preparation of the Plan.

Strategic work undertaken by the Councils includes background work in relation to Plan provisions, including those relating to:

- Core Strategy Compliance and Housing;
- Town Centre Revitalisation;
- Placemaking and Sustainable Communities;
- Climate Change;
- Economic Development;
- Sustainable Travel and Transportation;
- Infrastructure and Environmental Services;
- Built Heritage;
- Biodiversity and Natural Heritage; and
- Land Use Zoning Objectives.

The undertaking of the AA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of mitigation into Plan provisions as detailed in Section 5 of this report.

2.5 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

Many of the major issues affecting Portarlington's development are contingent on national policy and government funding. The Draft Plan sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower-level strategic actions.

The National Planning Framework[4] sets out Ireland's planning policy direction for the years 2018-2040. The National Planning Framework is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must, as relevant and appropriate, be implemented through the Laois and Offaly County Development Plans, that set out the overarching development strategy for the Counties, and the Joint Local Area Plan.

In order to be realised, projects included in the Joint Local Area Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

[4] At the time of writing this report, a process to provide a First Revision to the National Planning Framework is underway.

Section 3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Introduction to Screening

This stage of the process identifies any potential significant effects to European sites from a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. An important element of the AA process is the identification of the "'conservation objectives", "Qualifying Interests" (QIs) and/ or "Special Conservation Interests" (SCIs) of European sites requiring assessment. QIs are the habitat features and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive for which each European site has been designated and afforded protection. SCIs are wetland habitats and bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive. It is also vital that the threats to the ecological/environmental conditions that are required to support QIs and SCIs are considered as part of the assessment.

The following NPWS Generic Conservation Objectives have been considered in the screening:

- For SACs, 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; and
- For SPAs, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

Where available, Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat[5] or species[6] at that site have been considered.

3.2 Identification of Relevant European Sites

The Department of the Environment (2009) Guidance on AA recommends a 15 km buffer zone to be considered. A review of all sites within this zone has allowed a determination to be made that in the absence of significant hydrological links the characteristics of the Proposed Material Alterations will not impose effects beyond the 15 km buffer.

Details of European sites that occur within the 15 km Pathway Consideration Zone of the Plan area are listed in Table 3.2 and mapped on Figure 3.1. European sites with surface hydrological connectivity with the Draft Plan boundary beyond the 15 km Pathway Consideration Zone are shown on Figure 3.2 while European sites with shared groundwater bodies with the Draft Plan area are shown on Figure 3.3.

Information on QIs, SCIs and site-specific vulnerabilities and sensitivities (see Appendix I) and background information (such as that within Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission, site synopses and Natura 2000 standard data forms) has been considered by the AA screening assessment. Conservation objectives that have been considered by the assessment are included in the following NPWS documents:

- NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives for River Barrow and River Nore SAC [IE0002162] Version 1.
- NPWS (2021) Conservation Objectives for Mountmellick SAC [IE0002141] Version 1.
- NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives for Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA [IE0004160] Version 1.
- NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives for Seas off Wexford SPA [IE0004237] Version 1.

The assessment considers available conservation objectives. Since conservation objectives focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the QIs/SCIs of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential effects of the Proposed Material Alterations against the QIs/SCIs of each site. The conservation objectives for each site were consulted throughout the assessment process.

[5] Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when: its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing; 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.

[6] 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; 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.

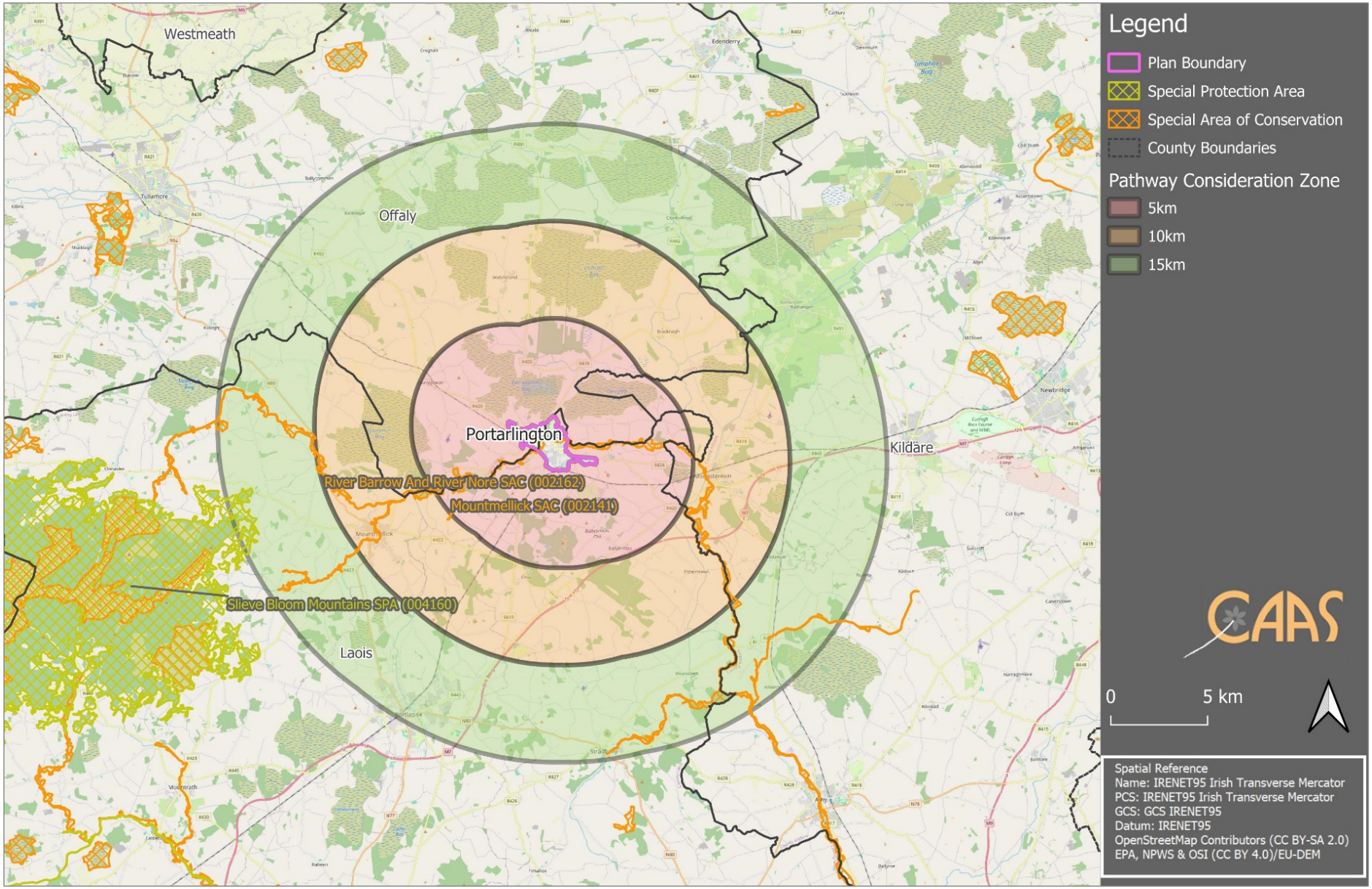

Figure 3.1 European sites within a 15km radius of the Draft Plan boundary[7]

[7] Source: NPWS

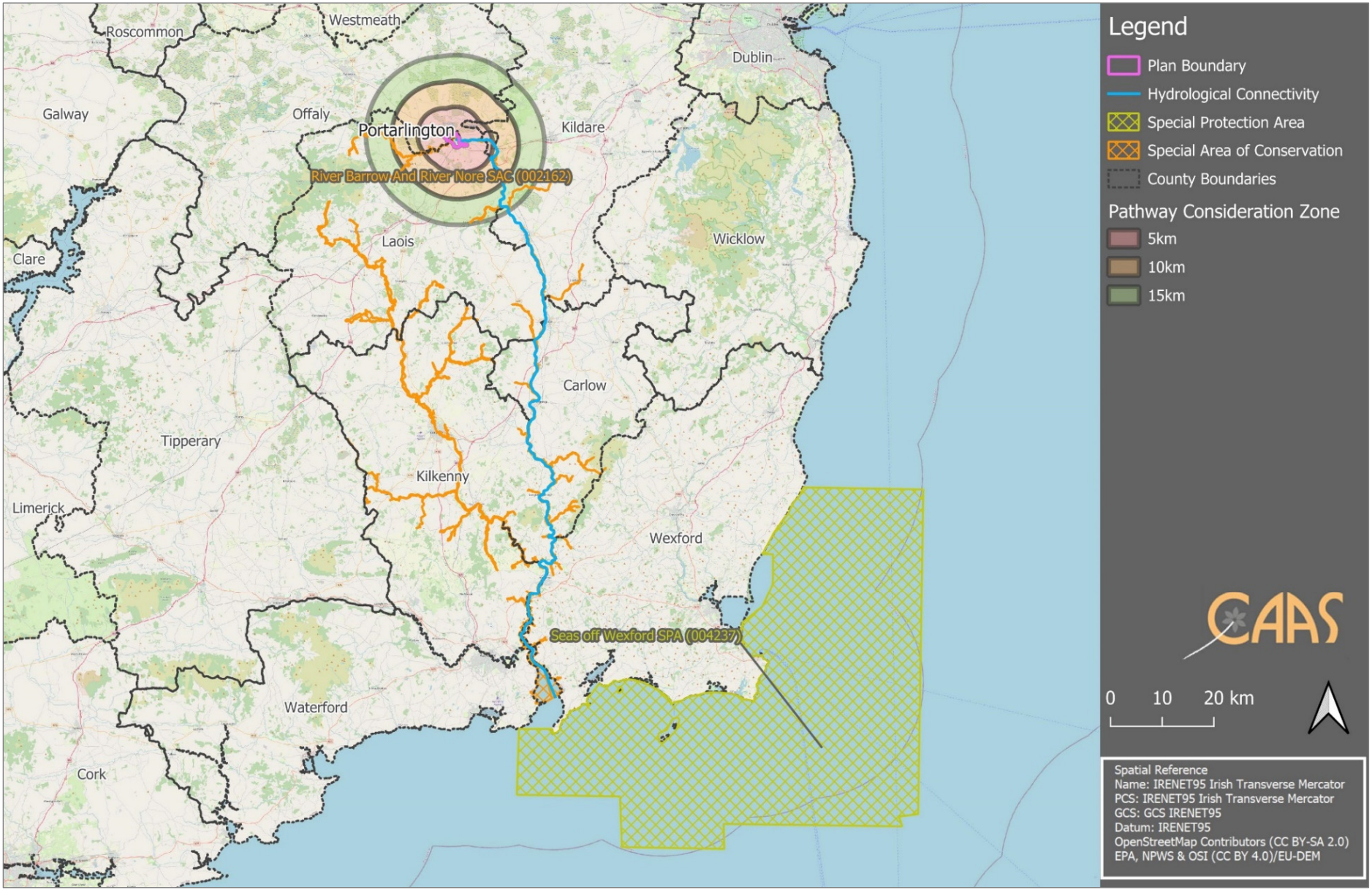

Figure 3.2 Surface hydrological connectivity with the Draft Plan boundary

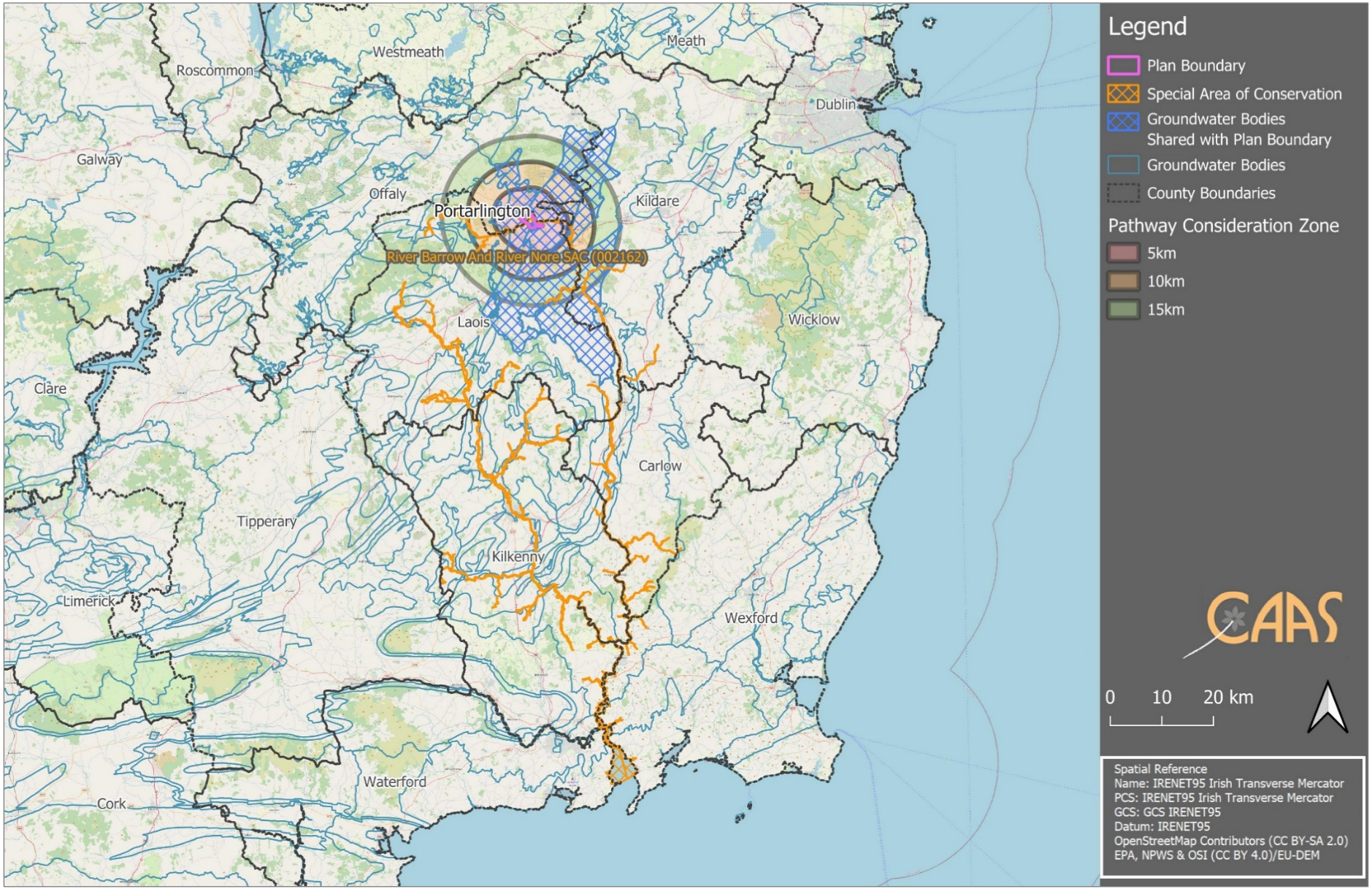

Figure 3.3 European sites[8] with shared groundwater bodies[9] with the Draft Plan area

[8] Special Areas of Conservation and/or Special Protection Areas with groundwater sensitive Qualifying Interests
[9] Source: EPA datasets – accessed at: https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/

3.3 Assessment Criteria and Screening

3.3.1 Is the Plan Necessary to the Management of European Sites?

The overarching objective of the Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, is not the nature conservation management of the sites, but to coordinate and plan the future development of the area to which the Plan relates. Therefore, the Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, is not considered to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of European sites.

3.3.2 Elements of the Plan with Potential to Give Rise to Effects

The Plan, to which the Proposed Material Alterations relate, provides a framework for the sustainable development of the Portarlington area. Draft Plan elements that could potentially affect the integrity of 1 (no.) European site include:

- Provisions, including those relating to housing, town centre revitalisation, placemaking and sustainable communities, climate change, economic development, sustainable travel and transportation, infrastructure and environmental services, built heritage and biodiversity and natural heritage, which introduce sources for potential effects through construction phase such as habitat loss, light pollution, disturbance effects and hydrological interactions through surface hydrological connectivity and/or shared groundwater sources;
- Loading pressures from the operational phase of developments – these sources could result in habitat loss/fragmentation, light pollution, disturbance effects and interactions with water quality (surface and/or groundwater); and
- Increases in visitor numbers to ecologically sensitive areas during the operational phase of developments which have potential to introduce sources for significant effects, such as recreational and tourism developments.

The existing Draft Plan has already been informed by a Stage 2 AA and a Natura Impact Report has been prepared. Mitigation was integrated into the Draft Plan that allowed the Natura Impact Report to conclude that that the Draft Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effect on the ecological integrity of any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects[10].

3.3.3 Screening of Sites

Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 examine whether there is potential for significant effects on European Sites considering information provided above.

[10] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:
a) no alternative solution available,
b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Table 3.1 Screening of European sites within 15 km of the Plan boundary

Ref	AA Screening Consideration
1	This alteration would further contribute towards provisions related to this sector/topic that are already contained within the Draft Plan. Considering the measures that have been already integrated into the Draft Plan and the existing Development Plans that contribute towards the protection of European sites, all potential risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.** Refer also to Appendix II.
2	The update to terminology/language/wording/mapping would not result in effects on any European site. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.**
3	This alteration relates to Plan text that sets the context for, summarises and/or provides clarification to Plan provisions. It does not interact with existing Plan provisions to an extent that it would result in effects on any European site. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.**
4	This alteration adds more detail but would not have the potential to result in result in effects on any European site. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.**
5	This alteration provides consistency with other parts of the Plan and/or with the wider planning and policy framework. It would not interact with Plan provisions to the extent that it would result in effects on any European site. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.**
6	Removal of this provision/text would remove the potential for any environmental effects; however, removal of the provision/text would not be likely to result in effects on any European site. **Consequently, Stage 2 AA is not required.**

Proposed Material Alteration No.	AA Screening Consideration
1	Selection of Considerations from Ref. 1 to 6 – Stage 2 AA not required
2	Selection of Considerations from Ref. 1 to 6 – Stage 2 AA not required
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106	Selection of Considerations from Ref. 1 to 6 – Stage 2 AA not required

Table 3.2 Screening of European sites within 15 km of the Plan boundary

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature[11]	Analysis for Likely Significant Effects (Refer also to Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above)	Likelihood of Significant Effects	Likelihood for Significant In-Combination Effects
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	Within	River lamprey *(Lampetra fluviatilis)* [1099], White-clawed crayfish *(Austropotamobius pallipes)* [1092], Nore Pearl Mussel *(Margaritifera durrovensis)* [1990], Petrifying springs with tufa formation *(Cratoneurion)* [7220], European dry heaths [4030], Atlantic salmon *(Salmo salar)* [1106], Freshwater pearl mussel *(Margaritifera margaritifera)* [1029], Reefs [1170], Sea lamprey *(Petromyzon marinus)* [1095], Brook lamprey *(Lampetra planeri)* [1096], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260], Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310], Killarney fern *(Trichomanes speciosum)* [1421], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0], Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430], Estuaries [1130], Atlantic salt meadows *(Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)* [1330], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Mediterranean salt meadows *(Juncetalia maritimi)* [1410], Twaite shad *(Alosa fallax)* [1103], Desmoulin`s whorl snail *(Vertigo moulinsiana)* [1016], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355]	The Draft Plan provides a framework for land use development and activities with potential for construction and operation source effects throughout the Draft Plan area. This SAC is sensitive to direct land use management activities, hydrological interactions and groundwater interactions. This site exists within the Draft Plan boundary. Considering the QIs of this SAC and their sensitivities, that the SAC is within the Draft Plan boundary, and that sources for potential significant effect have been identified for direct land use management activities and for hydrological interactions, via both groundwater and surface hydrological interactions, within the Draft Plan; sources with pathways for likely significant effects to this European site, resulting from the implementation of the Draft Plan, have been identified. These sources in the Draft Plan have already been addressed by the integration of mitigation into the Draft Plan. The Proposed Material Alterations do not present additional potential pathways or sources that have not already been considered by the Stage 2 AA of the Draft Plan. Therefore, no further consideration is required. As a result, further consideration is required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and a Natura Impact Report is required.	No – see also Table 3.1	No – see also Table 3.1
002141	Mountmellick SAC	4.63	Desmoulin`s whorl snail *(Vertigo moulinsiana)* [1016]	The Draft Plan provides a framework for land use development and activities with potential for construction and operation source effects throughout the Draft Plan area. This SAC is sensitive to direct land use management, hydrological interactions and groundwater interactions. This site exists 4.63 km outside of the Draft Plan area. There is no direct surface hydrological connection between the Draft Plan area and this site and there is no shared groundwater body between the Draft Plan boundary and this European site. Considering the QI of this SAC, the nature of the Draft Plan, and lack of significant connectivity of European sites to the Draft Plan, there are no pathways for surface, groundwater, or direct land use management potential effects on this SAC. Thus, there are no sources with pathways for likely significant effects foreseen and no further assessment is required	No – see also Table 3.1	No – see also Table 3.1
004160	Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA	13.57	Hen harrier *(Circus cyaneus)* [A082]	The Draft Plan provides a framework for land use development and activities with potential for construction and operation source effects throughout the Draft Plan area. The SPA is sensitive to direct land use management activities and disturbance effects. This site exists 13.57 km outside of the Draft Plan area SCI species are sensitive to disturbance effects; in general distances beyond 2 km are seen to be sufficient to preclude such effects[12,13]. These distances can vary due to factors such as species and/or time of year[14,15]. Given the distance between the Draft Plan area and the SPA there are no pathways for disturbance effects identified.	No – see also Table 3.1	No – see also Table 3.1

[11] Tern used to encompass both Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests
[12] Rudock, M. and Whitfield, D.P., 2007. A review of disturbance distances in selected bird species. A report from Natural Research (Projects) Ltd to Scottish Natural Heritage, 181.
[13] Bright, J.A., Langston, R. and Anthony, S., 2009. Mapped and written guidance in relation to birds and onshore wind energy development in England. Sandy: RSPB.
[14] Bötsch, Y., Tablado, Z. and Jenni, L., 2017. Experimental evidence of human recreational disturbance effects on bird-territory establishment. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 284(1858), p.20170846.
[15] Goss-Custard, J.D., Hoppe, C.H., Hood, M.J. and Stillman, R.A., 2020. Disturbance does not have a significant impact on waders in an estuary close to conurbations: importance of overlap between birds and people in time and space. Ibis, 162(3), pp.845-862.

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Qualifying Feature[11]	Analysis for Likely Significant Effects (Refer also to Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above)	Likelihood of Significant Effects	Likelihood for Significant In-Combination Effects
				SCI species are highly vagile and therefore may utilise ex-situ ecological resources which may have interactions with the Draft Plan; however, at this scale landscape characteristics and the availability of alternate resources ensure the local scale interactions with ex-situ resources are not likely to have significant effects on the SPA. Considering the SCI of this SPA, and given the nature of the Draft Plan and the distance involved between the Draft Plan area and the SPA, there are no sources of effect for direct land use management or disturbance effects to the SPA. Thus, there are no sources with pathways for likely significant effects foreseen and no further assessment is required.		
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA	92.83	Manx Shearwater *(Puffinus puffinus)* [A013], Kittiwake *(Rissa tridactyla)* [A188], Fulmar *(Fulmarus glacialis)* [A009], Red-throated Diver *(Gavia stellata)* [A001], Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Razorbill *(Alca torda)* [A200], Black-headed Gull *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus)* [A179], Herring Gull *(Larus argentatus)* [A184], Sandwich Tern *(Sterna sandvicensis)* [A191], Shag *(Phalacrocorax aristotelis)* [A018], Gannet *(Morus bassanus)* [A016], Puffin *(Fratercula arctica)* [A204], Lesser Black-backed Gull *(Larus fuscus)* [A183], Guillemot *(Uria aalge)* [A199], Roseate Tern *(Sterna dougallii)* [A192], Little Tern *(Sterna albifrons)* [A195], Common Tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax carbo)* [A017], Arctic Tern *(Sterna paradisaea)* [A194], Mediterranean Gull *(Larus melanocephalus)* [A176]	The Draft Plan provides a framework for land use development and activities with potential for construction and operation source effects throughout the Draft Plan area. The SPA is sensitive to direct land use management activities, hydrological interactions and disturbance effects. This site exists 92.83 km outside of the Draft Plan area There is a direct surface hydrological connection between the Draft Plan area and this site. SCI species are sensitive to disturbance effects; in general distances beyond 2 km are seen to be sufficient to preclude such effects[16,17]. These distances can vary due to factors such as species and/or time of year[18,19]. Given the distance between the Draft Plan area and the SPA there are no pathways for disturbance effects identified. SCI species are highly vagile and therefore may utilise ex-situ ecological resources which may have interactions with the Draft Plan; however, at this scale landscape characteristics and the availability of alternate resources ensure the local scale interactions with ex-situ resources are not likely to have significant effects on the SPA. Considering the SCIs of this SPA, and given the nature of the Draft Plan and the distance involved between the Draft Plan area and the SPA, there are no sources of effect for direct land use management or disturbance effects to the SPA. In addition, there are no sources of effect for hydrological interactions considering the distances involved and the significant dilution effect along the direct surface hydrological connection. Thus, there are no sources with pathways for likely significant effects foreseen and no further assessment is required	No – see also Table 3.1	No – see also Table 3.1

[16] Rudock, M. and Whitfield, D.P., 2007. A review of disturbance distances in selected bird species. A report from Natural Research (Projects) Ltd to Scottish Natural Heritage, 181.
[17] Bright, J.A., Langston, R. and Anthony, S., 2009. Mapped and written guidance in relation to birds and onshore wind energy development in England. Sandy: RSPB.
[18] Bötsch, Y., Tablado, Z. and Jenni, L., 2017. Experimental evidence of human recreational disturbance effects on bird-territory establishment. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 284(1858), p.20170846.
[19] Goss-Custard, J.D., Hoppe, C.H., Hood, M.J. and Stillman, R.A., 2020. Disturbance does not have a significant impact on waders in an estuary close to conurbations: importance of overlap between birds and people in time and space. Ibis, 162(3), pp.845-862.

3.4 Other Plans and Programmes

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely affect European sites. There are no provisions in the Proposed Material Alterations that introduce any potential sources for effects in addition to those already identified as being mitigated by the Stage 2 AA carried out for the Draft Plan. Therefore, there are no in combination effects identified.

Section 4 AA Screening Conclusion

This Screening for AA Report demonstrates that the implementation of the Proposed Material Alterations will not result in any likely significant effect on any European site.

Following the source-pathway-receptor model, the relevant attributes of European sites were assessed. No source for a likely significant effect to any European site would arise from the Proposed Material Alterations that have not already been considered by the existing AA process for the Draft Plan.

The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed through measures that have already been integrated into the Draft Plan and through existing, already in force, policies and objectives within the Laois and Offaly County Development Plans with which the Proposed Material Alterations and all lower tier plans/projects must comply. In addition, any future projects, plans etc. that may arise will themselves be subject to AA/Screening for AA when further details of design and location are known.

It is concluded that the Proposed Material Alterations will not give rise to any likely significant effect on any European site, alone or in combination with any other plans, programmes and projects.

This report is part of the overall and ongoing AA process that is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Draft Plan (an AA Natura Impact Report has already been placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan). It will be considered, alongside other documentation prepared as part of this process, at adoption of the Plan.

Appendix I Background information on European sites Assessed

List of European sites within 15 km of the Draft Plan boundary; including the Qualifying features (Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests) and Site Vulnerability/Sensitivity

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature	Pressure Codes	Known Threats and Pressures
002141	Mountmellick SAC	Desmoulin`s whorl snail *(Vertigo moulinsiana)* [1016]	H05.01, J02.05	Garbage and solid waste, modification of hydrographic functioning, general
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	Killarney fern *(Trichomanes speciosum)* [1421], River lamprey *(Lampetra fluviatilis)* [1099], White-clawed crayfish *(Austropotamobius pallipes)* [1092], Nore Pearl Mussel *(Margaritifera durrovensis)* [1990], Petrifying springs with tufa formation *(Cratoneurion)* [7220], European dry heaths [4030], Atlantic salmon *(Salmo salar)* [1106], Freshwater pearl mussel *(Margaritifera margaritifera)* [1029], Reefs [1170], Sea lamprey *(Petromyzon marinus)* [1095], Brook lamprey *(Lampetra planeri)* [1096], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260], Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310], Atlantic salt meadows *(Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)* [1330], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0], Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430], Estuaries [1130], Desmoulin`s whorl snail *(Vertigo moulinsiana)* [1016], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Mediterranean salt meadows *(Juncetalia maritimi)* [1410], Twaite shad *(Alosa fallax)* [1103], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355]	A02.01, B05, B07, C01.01.01, F02, C01.03, A04.01.01, A10.01, B02, I01, D03.01, J02.02.01, F01.01, B02.01.01, J02.06, E02, H01, K01.01, F02.01.02, F02.03, J02.12.02, J03.02.01, J02.05.02, J02, M01	Agricultural intensification, use of fertilizers (forestry), forestry activities not referred to above, sand and gravel quarries, fishing and harvesting aquatic resources, peat extraction, intensive cattle grazing, removal of hedges and copses or scrub, forest and plantation management & use, invasive non-native species, port areas, dredging or removal of limnic sediments, intensive fish farming, intensification , forest replanting (native trees), water abstractions from surface waters, industrial or commercial areas, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), erosion, netting, leisure fishing, dykes and flooding defence in inland water systems, reduction in migration or migration barriers, modifying structures of inland water courses, human induced changes in hydraulic conditions, changes in abiotic conditions
004160	Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA	Hen harrier *(Circus cyaneus)* [A082]	B, D01.02, E01.03, A04, D01.01, C01.03	Sylviculture, forestry, roads, motorways, dispersed habitation, grazing, paths, tracks, cycling tracks, peat extraction
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA	Fulmar *(Fulmarus glacialis)* [A009], Manx Shearwater *(Puffinus puffinus)* [A013], Kittiwake *(Rissa tridactyla)* [A188], Little Tern *(Sterna albifrons)* [A195], Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Razorbill *(Alca torda)* [A200], Black-headed Gull *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus)* [A179], Red-throated Diver *(Gavia stellata)* [A001], Sandwich Tern *(Sterna sandvicensis)* [A191], Shag *(Phalacrocorax aristotelis)* [A018], Gannet *(Morus bassanus)* [A016], Puffin *(Fratercula arctica)* [A204], Lesser Black-backed Gull *(Larus fuscus)* [A183], Guillemot *(Uria aalge)* [A199], Roseate Tern *(Sterna dougallii)* [A192], Mediterranean Gull *(Larus melanocephalus)* [A176], Common Tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax carbo)* [A017], Arctic Tern *(Sterna paradisaea)* [A194], Herring Gull *(Larus argentatus)* [A184]	See note in next column	Note: This European site has been recently designated and does not have threats and pressures assigned at the time of compiling this report. For the purposes of this report, the treats and pressures are assumed similar with that of similar coastal SPAs listed in this table.

List of all Qualifying Interests of SACs that have undergone Assessment including Summaries of Current Threats and Sensitivity to Effects

EU Code	Qualifying Interests	Article 17 Report Summary - Threats and Pressures	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures	Sensitivity of Qualifying Interests
[1016]	Desmoulin's Whorl Snail *(Vertigo moulinsiana)*	The main pressures are associated with natural succession resulting in species composition change and drying out of the habitat.	A07, A10, L01, L02	Abandonment of management/use of other agricultural and agroforestry systems (all except grassland), extensive grazing or under grazing by livestock, abiotic natural processes (e.g., erosion, silting up, drying out, submersion, salinization), natural succession resulting in species composition change (other than by direct changes of agricultural or forestry practices)	Changes to ground vegetation condition, groundwater dependent and is highly sensitive to hydrological changes.
[1029]	Freshwater Pearl Mussel *(Margaritifera margaritifera)*	The pressures facing this species come from a wide variety of sources (e.g. pollution from urban wastewater, development activities, farming and forestry), often quite removed from the species' habitat. Flow changes, caused by land drainage are also a significant pressure facing the species.	A26, A31, B23, B27, C05, D02, F12, F28, F31, F33	Agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters, drainage for use as agricultural land, forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters, modification of hydrological conditions, or physical alteration of water bodies and drainage for forestry (including dams), peat extraction, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water, modification of flooding regimes, flood protection for residential or recreational development, other modification of hydrological conditions for residential or recreational development, abstraction of ground and surface waters (including marine) for public water supply and recreational use	Surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Very highly sensitive to pollution.

EU Code	Qualifying Interests	Article 17 Report Summary - Threats and Pressures	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures	Sensitivity of Qualifying Interests
[1092]	White-clawed Crayfish *(Austropotamobius pallipes)*	The main pressures facing this species is related to the non-indigenous crayfish species (NICS) and Crayfish Plaque, a waterborne disease specific to freshwater crayfish.	I01, I05	Invasive alien species of union concern, plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests	Invasive species, disease, surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Very highly sensitive to pollution.
[1095]	Sea Lamprey *(Petromyzon marinus)*	Most of the pressures on Sea Lampreys are associated with hydropower infrastructure, reduction of prey populations due to overharvesting, drainage and the use of both natural and synthetic fertilisers. Changes in rainfall due to climate change is also considered a significant pressure on the species.	A19, A20, A31, D02, G01, N01, N02, N03, Xo	Application of natural fertilisers on agricultural land, application of synthetic (mineral) fertilisers on agricultural land, drainage for use as agricultural land, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, marine fishing and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change, increases or changes in precipitation due to climate change, threats and pressures from outside the member state	Marine water dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Coastal development, trampling from recreational activity.
[1096]	Brook Lamprey *(Lampetra planeri)*	Most of the pressures on Brook Lampreys are associated with drainage for agriculture, the use of both natural and synthetic fertilisers, tree removal. Infrastructure related to hydropower along with pollution to ground and surface water and the discharge of waste water are also considered pressures.	A19, A20, A31, B09, D02, F11, F12, N01, N02	Application of natural fertilisers on agricultural land, application of synthetic (mineral) fertilisers on agricultural land, drainage for use as agricultural land, clear-cutting, removal of all trees, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, pollution to surface or ground water due to urban runoffs, discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water, temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change	Surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Availability of suitable spawning ground is a considerable issue for the species.
[1099]	River Lamprey *(Lampetra fluviatilis)*	The main pressures on River Lampreys are associated with hydropower infrastructure and changes in rainfall due to climate change. The use of synthetic and natural fertilisers, drainage and also infrastructure related to shipping are also considered to be pressures on the species.	A19, A20, A31, D02, E03, N01, N02, N03	Application of natural fertilisers on agricultural land, application of synthetic (mineral) fertilisers on agricultural land, drainage for use as agricultural land, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, shipping lanes, ferry lanes and anchorage infrastructure (e.g., canalisation, dredging), temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change, increases or changes in precipitation due to climate change	Surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Availability of suitable spawning ground is a considerable issue for the species.
[1103]	Twaite Shad *(Alosa fallax fallax)*	There are a number of pressures related to this species, mainly relating to pollution, alteration of flow patterns, and habitat disturbance/	A19, A20, D02, E03, G01, G06, G12, I02, N01, N03	Application of natural fertilisers on agricultural land, application of synthetic (mineral) fertilisers on agricultural land, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, shipping lanes, ferry lanes and anchorage infrastructure (e.g., canalisation, dredging), marine fishing and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, freshwater fish and shellfish harvesting (recreational), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change, increases or changes in precipitation due to climate change	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change.
[1106]	Salmon *(Salmo salar)*	Known pressures include exploitation at sea in commercial fisheries, interceptor fisheries in coastal waters, aquaculture and predation. In addition, the negative influence of climate change on prey structure as well as alterations in habitat and water quality are also pressures on the species.	A25, A26, B23, D02, F12, F28, G11, G19, G20, I02, J01, K05, L06, N01	Agricultural activities generating point source pollution to surface or ground waters, agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters, forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters, hydropower (dams, weirs, run-off-the-river), including infrastructure, discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water, modification of flooding regimes, flood protection for residential or recreational development, illegal harvesting, collecting and taking, other impacts from marine aquaculture, including infrastructure, abstraction of water, flow diversion, dams and other modifications of hydrological conditions for freshwater aquaculture, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), mixed source pollution to surface and ground waters (limnic and terrestrial), physical alteration of water bodies, interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change	Disease, parasites and barriers to movement.
[1130]	Estuaries	Most of the pressures on estuaries come from various sources of pollution, including domestic wastewater, agriculture and marine aquaculture. Alien invasive species such as the naturalised Pacific oyster (*Magalana gigas*) are also recognised as a significant pressure	A28, F20, G16, I02, XU	Agricultural activities generating marine pollution, residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine pollution (excl. marine macro- and micro- particular pollution, marine aquaculture generating marine pollution, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), unknown pressure	Inappropriate development, changes in turbidity

EU Code	Qualifying Interests	Article 17 Report Summary - Threats and Pressures	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures	Sensitivity of Qualifying Interests
[1140]	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	Pressures on mudflats and sandflats are partly caused by pollution from agricultural, forestry and wastewater sources, as well as impacts associated with marine aquaculture, particularly the Pacific oyster (*Magallana gigas*).	A28, F20, G16	Agricultural activities generating marine pollution, residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine pollution (excl. marine macro- and micro- particular pollution, marine aquaculture generating marine pollution	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Moderate sensitivity to pollution. Changes to salinity and tidal regime. Coastal development.
[1170]	Reefs	The main pressures on reefs come from fishing methods that damage the seafloor.	G01, G03	Marine fishing and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) activities causing physical loss and disturbance of seafloor habitats	Sensitive to disturbance and pollution.
[1310]	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Pressures on Salicornia mud are caused by alien species and overgrazing by livestock	A09, I02	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern)	Marine water dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Infilling, reclamation, invasive species.
[1330]	Atlantic salt meadows *(Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)*	The main pressures on Atlantic salt meadows are from agriculture, including ecologically unstable grazing regimes and land reclamation, and the invasive non-native species common cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*).	A09, A33, A36, F07, F08, I02	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, modification of hydrological flow or physical alternation of water bodies for agriculture (excluding development and operation of dams), agriculture activities not referred to above, sports, tourism and leisure activities, modification of coastline, estuary and coastal conditions for development, use and protection of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational infrastructure and areas (including sea defence or coast protection works and infrastructures), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern)	Marine and groundwater dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Overgrazing, erosion and accretion.
[1355]	Otter *(Lutra lutra)*	There are no pressures facing this species	Xxp, Xxt	No pressures, no threats	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Sensitivity to pollution.
[1410]	Mediterranean salt meadows *(Juncetalia maritimi)*	Most of the pressures on Mediterranean salt meadows are associated with agriculture, including overgrazing, under-grazing and land reclamation.	A09, A10, A33, A36	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, extensive grazing or under grazing by livestock, modification of hydrological flow or physical alternation of water bodies for agriculture (excluding development and operation of dams), agriculture activities not referred to above	Marine and groundwater dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Coastal development and reclamation.
[1421]	Killarney Fern *(Trichomanes speciosum)*	There are no pressures facing this species.	Xxp, Xxt	No pressures, no threats	Land use management and direct impacts.
[3260]	Water courses of plain to montane levels with vegetation *(Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion)*	The majority of pressures on this habitat are caused by damage through hydrological and morphological change, eutrophication and other water pollution.	A25, A26, B23, C05, F11, F12, F13, K01, K04, K05	Agricultural activities generating point source pollution to surface or ground waters, agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters, forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters, peat extraction, pollution to surface or ground water due to urban runoffs, discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water, plants, contaminated or abandoned industrial sites generating pollution to surface or ground water, abstraction from groundwater, surface water or mixed water, modification of hydrological flow, physical alteration of water bodies	Surface water dependent Highly sensitive to hydrological change and direct physical interactions.
[4030]	European dry heaths	A number of significant pressures were recorded for this habitat in the current reporting period, particularly overgrazing by sheep and burning for agriculture with afforestation and wind farms also being recognised as pressures.	A09, A11, B01, D01, N01, N02	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, burning for agriculture, conversion to forest from other land uses, or afforestation (excluding drainage), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change	Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Changes in management. Changes in nutrient status.
[6430]	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the	Pressures on the habitat include invasive species; and agricultural intensification and drainage in the lowlands.	A09, A31, I01, I02	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, drainage for use as agricultural land, invasive alien species of union concern, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern)	Changes in management such as grazing regime. Changes in nutrient or base status. Changes to vegetation composition. Introduction of alien species.

EU Code	Qualifying Interests	Article 17 Report Summary - Threats and Pressures	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures	Sensitivity of Qualifying Interests
	montane to alpine levels				
[7220]	Petrifying springs with tufa formation *(Cratoneurion)*	Pressures related to this habitat are associated with drainage, pollution to ground and surface waters, recreational activities, infrastructure, overgrazing and abandonment of grassland management.	A06, A10, E01, F07, H08, J01, K02, K04, L02	Abandonment of grassland management (e.g., cessation of grazing or of mowing), extensive grazing or under grazing by livestock, roads, paths, railroads and related infrastructure (e.g., bridges, viaducts, tunnels), sports, tourism and leisure activities, other human intrusions and disturbance not mentioned above (dumping, accidental and deliberate disturbance of bat roosts (e.g., caving)), mixed source pollution to surface and ground waters (limnic and terrestrial), drainage, modification of hydrological flow, natural succession resulting in species composition change (other than by direct changes of agricultural or forestry practices)	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
[91A0]	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles	The significant pressure facing this habitat are associated with invasive non-native species such as *Rhododendron ponticum*, cherry laurel *(Prunus laurocerasus)* and beech *(Fagus sylvatica)* and overgrazing by deer.	A09, B09, I02, I04, M07	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, clear-cutting, removal of all trees, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, storm, cyclone	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Introduction of alien species.
[91E0]	Alluvial forests with Alder and Ash *(Alnus glutinosa, Fraxinus excelsior, Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*	Many of the pressures facing this habitat include invasive species, particularly sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus)*, beech *(Fagus sylvatica)*, Indian balsam *(Impatiens glandulifera)* and currant species *(Ribes nigrum* and *R. rubrum)* as well as some native species such as brambles *(Rubus fruticoses agg.)* and common nettle, along with over felling.	B09, I02, I04, I05	Clear-cutting, removal of all trees, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Changes in management.

List of all Special Conservation Interest of SPAs that have undergone Assessment including Summaries of Current Threats and Sensitivity to Effects

Species Code	Common Name	Scientific Name	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures
A001	Red-throated Diver	*Gavia stellata*	I02, F07, C05, G06, L06, N03, A11, B01, I05, N05, G01, D01	Other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), sports, tourism and leisure activities, peat extraction, freshwater fish and shellfish harvesting (recreational), interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), increases or changes in precipitation due to climate change, burning for agriculture, conversion to forest from other land uses, or afforestation (excluding drainage), plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests, change of habitat location, size, and / or quality due to climate change, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure
A009	Fulmar	*Fulmarus glacialis*	I02, N06, N07, F22, F23, G12, D01, G01	Other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species
A013	Manx Shearwater	*Puffinus puffinus*	A09, F22, F23, G12, I02, N07, G01, N06	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change
A016	Gannet	*Morus bassanus*	F22, F23, G12, D01, F07, J02, N06, N07	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities, mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change
A082	Hen Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	B01, B03, A05, D01, A13, A02, B16, A11, A07, I04, A03, A31, A21, A15	Conversion to forest from other land uses, or afforestation (excluding drainage), replanting with or introducing non-native or non-typical species (including new species and gmos), removal of small landscape features for agricultural land parcel consolidation (hedges, stone walls, rushes, open ditches, springs, solitary trees, etc.), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, reseeding of grasslands and other semi-natural habitats, conversion from one type of agricultural land use to another (excluding drainage and burning), wood transport, burning for agriculture, abandonment of management/use of other agricultural and agroforestry systems (all except grassland), problematic native species, conversion from mixed farming and agroforestry systems to specialised (e.g. single crop) production, drainage for use as agricultural land, use of plant protection chemicals in agriculture, tillage practices (e.g. ploughing) in agriculture

Species Code	Common Name	Scientific Name	Threats and Pressures Codes	Known Threats and Pressures
A176	Mediterranean Gull	*Larus melanocephalus*	I02, I04	Other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species
A179	Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	F22, F23, I02, I04, D01, M08	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, flooding (natural processes)
A188	Kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*	F22, F23, G12, D01, G01, L06, N06, N07	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change
A192	Roseate Tern	*Sterna dougallii*	G12, N07, I02, I04, L06, M08, N06, D01, F07, G01	Bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), flooding (natural processes), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species
A193	Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	A09, G12, I02, I04, J02, L06, M08, D01, F07, G01, N06, N07	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal), interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), flooding (natural processes), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change
A194	Arctic Tern	*Sterna paradisaea*	A09, G12, I02, I04, L06, M08, N06, N07, D01, F07, G01	Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, interspecific relations (competition, predation, parasitism, pathogens), flooding (natural processes), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species
A200	Razorbill	*Alca torda*	F22, F23, G01, G12, J02, N06, N07, D01, F07	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), mixed source marine water pollution (marine and coastal), desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities
A204	Puffin	*Fratercula arctica*	F22, F23, G12, I02, D01, F07, N07, G01, N06	Residential or recreational activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), industrial or commercial activities and structures generating marine macro- and micro- particulate pollution (e.g. plastic bags, styrofoam), bycatch and incidental killing (due to fishing and hunting activities), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), wind, wave and tidal power, including infrastructure, sports, tourism and leisure activities, decline or extinction of related species (e.g. food source / prey, predator / parasite, symbiote, etc.) due to climate change, marine fish and shellfish harvesting (professional, recreational) causing reduction of species/prey populations and disturbance of species, desynchronisation of biological / ecological processes due to climate change

Appendix II Mitigation Measures from the existing Draft Plan and existing Development Plan

This appendix outlines measures that have been incorporated into the Draft Plan and associated existing Laois and Offaly County Development Plans in order to mitigate against potential effects to European sites as already identified by the Stage 2 AA for the Draft Plan.

Measures that will protect European sites and their sustaining resources integrated into the Plan[20]

Component/ Source / Sensitivity	Plan Measure(s)[21]
Adherence to Laois and Offaly Development Plans	**Section 1.1** In the full interpretation of all objectives for Portarlington, it is essential that the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and this JLAP are read together. Where conflicting objectives arise between the County Development Plans and the JLAP, the objectives of the relevant County Development Plan shall take precedence. It should be noted that the general development management standards applicable to the plan area are included in the relevant County Development Plans, while policies and objectives that are specific to Portarlington are included in this JLAP. It is a specific provision of this Plan to ensure that all of the provisions from the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 identified in the SEA Environmental Report and/or AA Natura Impact Report that accompany this Plan shall be complied with throughout the implementation of this Plan.
Natural heritage, biodiversity and National / European sites	**Policy 15.1** Prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in any 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). **Policy 15.4** Protect, manage, and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape, and environment of Portarlington in recognition of its importance as a natural resource that can contribute towards sustainable urban drainage, flood management, and climate action. **Policy 15.6** Support the conservation and enhancement of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and to protect the SAC from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of the designated site, in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines. **Objective 6.8** Protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment, by promoting awareness and high-quality urban design and utilising relevant heritage legislation. **Table 10 Town Centre Opportunity Sites, Sites 1-5** Any development of the land should be informed by - Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive where required **Objective 15.8** Seek to preserve and protect trees that have a particular local amenity, conservation or landscape value and require the planting of new native tree species in all new developments. **Objective 15.11** Protect and preserve landscape features which significantly contribute to green infrastructure in Portarlington, including trees, hedgerows, woodlands, wetlands, watercourses, and other habitats.
Wetlands and surface water courses	**Policy 15.6** Support the conservation and enhancement of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and to protect the SAC from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of the designated site, in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines. **Policy 15.6** Support the conservation and enhancement of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and to protect the SAC from any plans and projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the coherence or integrity of the designated site, in accordance with relevant EU environmental directives and applicable national legislation, policies, plans and guidelines. **Policy 13.2** Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Uisce Éireann to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments.
Management of water services, wastewater and implementation of SuDS[22]	**Policy 10.6** Require that all development proposals in Portarlington integrate SUDS, and nature-based solutions to SUDS, as part of an overall sustainable urban drainage and urban greening approach, unless they are demonstrated to be operationally unfeasible to the satisfaction of the Council. **Policy 13.4** Minimise flood risk arising from pluvial (surface water) flooding in Portarlington by promoting the use of natural flood risk management measures including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions. **Policy 13.1** Require that new developments connect to the public water and wastewater networks in Portarlington where public mains are available, and subject to connection agreements with Uisce Éireann and compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria. **Policy 13.2** Protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Uisce Éireann to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchments. **Policy 13.3** Preserve free from development the wayleaves of all public sewers and all public water mains.

[20] These measures may be amended on foot of Proposed Material Alterations and/or further modifications, in advance of Plan adoption
[21] All of the measures included in this table address the protection of European sites in relation to the QIs/SCIs in view of their respective COs and the potential effects identified in the Plan
[22] Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

	Objective 13.1 Support Uisce Éireann in the provision of a sufficient quantity and quality of water to serve the needs of the existing and future population of Portarlington over the period of the Plan and in accordance with the Core Strategies of Laois and Offaly County Councils, and to promote the sustainable management of the water supply for the town. **Objective 13.3** Support wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provision by Uisce Éireann in Portarlington, including any maintenance works and planned upgrades of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the associated wastewater network serving the town, including the safeguarding of existing infrastructure.
Plan monitoring	**Policy 17.1** Implement in conjunction with key stakeholders, the policies and objectives of this Local Area Plan and to review the success or otherwise of the implementation of policies and objectives with reference to Section 10.3 of the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022), Section 6.5 of Local Area Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2013), Chapter 14 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Chapter 14 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.
Tourism and leisure activities	**Objective 15.10** Promote, protect, and enhance sustainable and appropriate access to natural heritage in Portarlington and recognise the important role of natural heritage in the area, in terms of enhancing the image of the town and contributing to quality of life and wellbeing, economic growth, tourism and recreation. **Objective 15.17** Ensure the appropriate management of leisure activities in and adjacent to the River Barrow in order to ensure there is no impact on the distribution, populations or breeding grounds of the Qualifying Interests of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
Blueways and greenways	**Policy 15.1** Prohibit any development that would be harmful to or that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats and/or disturbance of species in any 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). **Objective 15.9** Promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes respond to the ecological protection needs of each site.
Built environment	**Policy 7.2** Promote and encourage compact growth in Portarlington through the sustainable intensification and consolidation of the town centre. **Policy 10.4** Support the effective and efficient use of land in Portarlington, prioritising compact growth through the development and regeneration of vacant and underutilised brownfield/infill land and buildings within the existing built-up footprint of the town. **Policy 11.6** Support the continued operation and reasonable development of existing non-conforming uses provided that such uses do not: - Cause an adverse impact on the environment. **Objective 12.8** Investigate the feasibility of providing future relief roads as indicated on the Objectives Map taking into account environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the Laois County Development Plan and the Offaly County Development Plan. The development of any relief road proposal shall be subject to the requirements of the EIA, Habitats, Water Framework and Flood Directives where relevant and appropriate.
Flood Risk Management	**Objective 6.9** Develop and improve flood mitigation measures throughout the town and rural hinterland in compliance with the Barrow Flood Risk Management Plan (OPW, 2018), and the European Habitats Directive. **Table 10 Town Centre Opportunity Sites, Sites 1-5** Any development of the land should be informed by - Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive where required **Policy 13.4** Minimise flood risk arising from pluvial (surface water) flooding in Portarlington by promoting the use of natural flood risk management measures including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions. **Policy 13.5** Require the submission of a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), by a suitably qualified and indemnified professional, in areas at risk of flooding in Portarlington. The assessment shall be prepared in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG and OPW, 2009) and Circular PL2/2014 (and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines). **Objective 13.4** Manage flood risk in Portarlington in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and in accordance with the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), Circular PL02/2014, and any future revisions or updates to these Guidelines.
Invasive species	The management of invasive species' occurrence and risk where required is provided for via alignment with and adherence to the policy objectives of both the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Laois Conty Development Plan 2021-2027. This statement therefore renders any development or project resulting from the implementation of this Draft Plan subject to compliance with policy objective BLP-34 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 for areas of Portarlington to which this Plan relates, and policy objective BNH 5 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027
Climate	**Objective 6.10** Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Portarlington. **Chapter 10 Climate Action** **Strategic Aim:** To tackle the challenge of climate change in Portarlington, focusing on the role of spatial planning in contributing to the transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient future, through targeted climate change mitigation and adaptation measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and increasing energy efficiency and conservation.

	Policy 10.1 Support the implementation of International and National objectives on climate action including the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (and any amending legislation) and both the Laois Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 and the Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 (and any updated Plans). **Policy 10.2** Support the transition of Portarlington to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency and conservation. **Policy 10.3** Secure climate resilience and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Portarlington by actively implementing policies which support integrated land use planning and sustainable travel, and maximise such opportunities through development location, form, layout, and design. **Policy 10.5** Secure climate resilience and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Portarlington through support for urban regeneration projects and interventions, including the implementation of the 'Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030'. **Policy 10.7** Require the use of renewable energy technologies in residential, commercial and community developments. **Policy 10.8** Support and facilitate the installation of lower carbon and low carbon heating options including district heating systems as a decarbonising technology in new developments in Portarlington, subject to compliance with proper planning and environmental considerations. **Policy 10.9** Support construction of green routes/cycleways/pedestrian routes throughout the town. **Policy 10.10** Support the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electrical vehicles throughout the town, both on street and in new developments, in accordance with car parking standards and best practice. **Objective 10.1** Support, in conjunction with key stakeholders, the implementation of the Climate Action Plans for County Laois and County Offaly, and to facilitate their role as a driver in the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation in Portarlington, and the translation of national climate policy to local and community levels in the town. **Policy 12.1** Actively support an integrated approach to land use and transport planning in Portarlington that promotes a shift towards a sustainable, healthy, and low carbon town with a reduced need for car-based travel, and through the prioritisation of development that is within reasonable walking and cycling distances from key employment, service, educational, and recreational areas, and key public transport nodes. **Policy 13.7** Require the use of renewable energy technologies in residential, commercial and community developments.
Waste Management	**Policy 13.6** Require the incorporation of sustainable waste management measures within developments, including the provision of adequately sized facilities for the storage, separation, and collection of waste and recyclable materials. **Objective 13.5** Promote and support sustainable forms of waste management by households, communities, and businesses, including waste prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling, and recovery.