

### 3 STAGE 1- SCREENING

The purpose of the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening of the Draft County Development Plan was to identify the European Sites with the potential to be impacted by the Plan and to determine if there was sufficient information as to decide if a significant effect was likely. By the nature of forward planning, the policies and objectives making up the County Development Plan are an evolving suite which are subject to change as a result of feedback from the SEA and AA processes, public consultation and councillor amendments over an extended period of time.

Each strategic policy and objective in the Draft Plan was reviewed with respect to each identified European Site and a determination was made as to whether there was potential for any aspect of the objective, either alone or in combination with other related objectives, to impact on the integrity of the European Site.

A buffer of 15km was considered as the appropriate zone of influence (Zoi) extending beyond the reach of the footprint of the draft Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan boundary, as per guidance (DEHLG 2010). The actual extent of the Zoi depends on the pathway for potential impacts, as well as the specific nature of different habitats/species for which a European Site is protected; and for this reason must be scientifically defined based upon further information. In certain situations, it would be scientifically appropriate, based on the published information, to extend the distance of the Zoi further afield. In regard of the objectives and potential impacts arising from the implementation of the draft CDP, the 15 kilometre distance was considered to be acceptable to screen all likely significant effects that might arise as a result of the implementation of the plan.

Screening for the Draft Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022 and proposed amendments was undertaken between March 2014 and October 2015. This section provides a summary of the process, key issues for European Sites within the Zone of Influence of the Plan and the conclusions relating to the requirement for Stage 2 Assessment.

The County Development Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Sites in the zone of influence of the Plan. However, it does include, *inter alia*, measures to protect, conserve and manage the County's natural heritage in a prudent and sustainable manner, including European Sites, and to seek its enhancement where appropriate and feasible.

#### 3.1 APPROACH TO AA

As a proactive measure, prior to compilation of the first draft County Development Plan, the AA team provided protection policies for inclusion in the draft plan to ensure that protection policies for the Natura 2000 network within and in the vicinity of the County boundary were interwoven into the fabric of the plan (see **Table 5.2**). In addition, other policies including those relating to water supply, waste water, surface water drainage and groundwater were provided to ensure the protection of supporting features, including water quality. As a result, the first draft CDP contained numerous policies and objectives focussed on the protection of the Natura 2000 Network, with the express purpose of contributing to the conservation of European Sites in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Following this initial proactive step, the Plan team developed draft policies and objectives. The AA team reviewed all draft policies and objectives for potential to impact on European Sites in the administrative area of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and within a further buffer of 15km outside the County boundary. In many cases, the objectives and policies were general measures which had no specific potential for impacts, however a small number presented potential for impact and these were further considered in this Screening Report. During the screening process, consideration was given to direct, indirect, secondary and in combination impacts over the short, medium and long term. As noted earlier, there are eight European Sites situated either within the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County boundary or less than 1km off the coast. These include:-

- Wicklow Mountains cSAC
- South Dublin Bay cSAC
- Knocksink Wood cSAC
- Ballyman Glen cSAC
- Wicklow Mountains SPA
- South Dublin Bay & River Tolka Estuary SPA
- Dalkey Islands SPA
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island cSAC

Land-use measures proposed in the draft Plan were considered to have the greatest potential to directly impact these sites. Direct impacts included habitat loss and fragmentation arising from land-take requirements for development and changes in land use or management, resulting in changes to habitats. Indirect impacts included the effects of disturbance or displacement of species; habitat degradation; and reduced water quality. The introduction of invasive species can also be defined as an indirect impact, which results in increased movement of vectors (humans, fauna, surface water), and consequently the transfer of alien species from one area to another. Impact pathways included:-

- Physical proximity,
- Hydrological linkages,
- Mobile species linkages, and
- Aerial deposition.

Where negative impacts were identified, and following the best practice approach in relation to mitigation, the AA team provided mitigation in the form of new policies and modification to existing policies to ensure no adverse effects on European Sites within the zone of Influence. This approach yielded positive results following the first round screening of all measures, ensuring that the AA process could conclude at Stage 1.

### **3.2 SCREENING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

Following a period of public consultation and the preparation of a Chief Executives Report relating to the submissions received, the elected members considered the Draft Plan and the Chief Executives Report at a series of special Council meetings held in October 2015. In accordance with Section 12 of the Planning and Development Act the elected members have by way of a resolution proposed a number of material amendments. One of these material amendments resulted in the inclusion of a map based feature which is in direct conflict with the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA in the vicinity of Booterstown. In light of this, and based on the precautionary principle it could not be conclusively determined that the European Site would not be adversely affected by the implementation of the draft Plan and therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

### **3.3 CONSULTATION AND REVIEW**

As part of the AA (and related SEA) process, consultation took place with a range of bodies including: EPA; Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG); Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DECLG) and Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR). Responses received during the SEA Scoping and subsequently consultation on the draft development plan, have informed the content and scope of the NIR.