

HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT - SCREENING REPORT -

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

FOR THE

DÚN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016

for: Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

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Section 1 Preamble

1.1 The Habitats Directive

This is the Screening Report on the Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA)¹ of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan (CDP) - in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

Furthermore, Article 6(4) states:

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

In Ireland, Natura 2000 comprises sites that are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and/or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)².

1.2 HDA Stages

According to the European Commission's guidance document: *"Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)"*³ HDA comprises four stages:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 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 Natura 2000 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.

¹ also referred to as Appropriate Assessment (AA)

² including Ramsar sites

³ European Commission 2002

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 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.

This report documents the first of these stages. It's conclusion that significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites are unlikely means that further HDA stages are not required.

1.3 Report Format

The headings in this and the following sections are derived from the European Commission's guidance document: *"Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)"*⁴

⁴ European Commission 2002

Section 2 The Plan

2.1 Brief Description of the Plan

Under Section 9 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, every planning authority must make a development plan, setting the framework for all future development in the planning authority's area for the stated period, for the whole functional area of the authority every six years. The plan is required to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in question. It is in this context in which Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council - the planning authority for the administrative area within the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County boundary - has adopted the County Development Plan 2010 - 2016 (CDP).

The CDP replaces the current 2004-2010 CDP and it is intended to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown for a duration of six years, unless amended.

The CDP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements and the various provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations) 2004 and sets out Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's policies for the sustainable development of the County to 2016 and beyond.

The CDP consists of:

- The Written Statement;
- A volume of Appendices; and,
- Maps.

The Vision of the CPD is:

'To plan for and facilitate appropriate levels of sustainable development in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown based on high quality residential, employment and recreational environments allied to the delivery of enhanced sustainable transportation patterns. To create a high-quality physical environment that meets the growing needs of those living, working or visiting the County in an inclusive, balanced and integrated way to ensure communities can thrive in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable manner – all within the parameters of the strategic framework laid down by the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area.'

The CDP is based on three fundamental goals that underpin both the overall strategy and individual policies contained within the Plan. These goals are as follows:

Goal 1

To promote and provide for the sustainable development of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to enable it to fulfil its role as an important player in the wider Greater Dublin Area.

Goal 2

To promote social inclusion and to facilitate equality of access to employment, education, transport, suitable housing and social and cultural activities, whether by direct provision (e.g. social housing) or by facilitating other agencies and stakeholders to provide the service (e.g. education and health services).

Goal 3

To provide for a high quality natural and built environment and improved quality of life for those living and working in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and for those visiting the County.

2.2 Is the Plan Necessary to Management of Natura 2000 Sites?

The Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites in the Plan area. However, it does include, inter alia, measures to protect, conserve and manage the County's natural heritage in a prudent and sustainable manner, including Natura 2000 sites, and to seek its enhancement where appropriate and feasible.

2.3 Impact Avoidance Measures

The preparation of this Plan has been an iterative process and this assessment has been used to inform the development of appropriate policies and objectives since the early stages of the Plan review. As a result, the CDP contains numerous measures which will contribute to the conservation of Natura 2000 sites in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Chapter 2 *Overall Strategy* contains the following specific aim:

Landscape, Heritage and Biodiversity

To protect the landscape of the County in a way that ensures features of natural heritage are protected, important wildlife habitats are conserved, watercourses are safeguarded from pollution; the beauty of the landscape is maintained and enriched and recreation uses are facilitated in a sensitive manner.

In Section 9 Landscape, Heritage and Biodiversity, Section 9.1 Introduction states:

The Council shall set up procedures to ensure compliance by plan-makers with the requirement of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive for land use plans. All subsequent plan-making and adoption of plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

Section 9.3 *Heritage and Biodiversity* contains the following provisions:

Policy LHB5: Heritage and Protection of the Environment

It is Council policy to protect and conserve the environment including, in particular, the architectural, archaeological and natural heritage of the County and in particular to conserve, manage and protect nationally important and EU designated sites including Special Protection Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas.

Policy LHB6: Heritage Plan

It is Council policy to implement the current Heritage Plan and to produce a second Heritage Plan (2009-2014) for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown which will be set within the context of the National Heritage Plan published by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. In preparing the second County Heritage Plan it will be an objective of the Council to ensure a balance between protection of heritage and the implementation of other, often competing, policies in the Development Plan, and have due regard to each.

Policy LHB7: Biodiversity Plan

It is Council Policy to implement the County Biodiversity Plan 2008-2012 and have due regard to the recommendations arising from its implementation in accordance with the National Biodiversity Plan, prepared by the Department of the Arts, Heritage, Gaelteacht and the Islands, (2002)

Policy LHB8: Special Protection Area (Birds), Proposed Natural Heritage Areas and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation

It is the Policy of the Council to protect and preserve areas designated as Proposed Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Candidate Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas (Birds)

Policy LHB9: Non-Designated Areas of Biodiversity Importance

It is Council policy to protect and promote the conservation of Biodiversity in areas of natural heritage importance outside designated areas and to ensure that features of biodiversity importance including species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000, the Birds Directive 1979, and the Habitats Directive 1992 are adequately protected. Ecological assessments will be carried out for all developments in areas that support, or have potential to support features of biodiversity importance or protected species and appropriate mitigation/avoidance measures will be implemented. In implementing this policy regard shall be had to the recommendations and objectives of the Green City Guidelines (2008).

Policy LHB10: Rivers and Waterways

It is Council policy to maintain and protect the natural character and ecological value of the river and stream corridors in the County and where possible to enhance existing channels and to encourage diversity of habitat. It is also policy (subject to the sensitivity of the riverside habitat) to provide public access to riparian corridors to promote improved passive recreational activities.

Policy LHB11: Trees and Urban Woodlands

It is Council policy that trees, groups of trees or woodlands particularly where they form a significant feature in the landscape or, are important in setting the character of ecology of an area shall be preserved wherever possible. New urban woodlands will be planted in areas deficient in tree coverage and/or associated within new development nodes and infrastructure programmes.

Policy LHB12: Hedgerows

It is Council policy to protect hedgerows in the County from development, which would impact adversely upon them. It is Council policy to promote the County's hedgerows by increasing coverage, where possible, using locally native species and to develop an appropriate code of practice for road hedgerow maintenance.

Policy LHB14: Green Belts

It is the policy of the Council to retain the individual physical character of towns and development areas by the designation of green belt areas where appropriate.

Policy LHB27: Strategic Environmental Assessment- Mitigation Measures

It is Council policy to implement the mitigation measures as set out in Section 9.3 of the Environmental Report accompanying the Development Plan, which are envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the County Development Plan.

Other relevant measures include the following, which appear in Section 13 *Environmental Infrastructure and Management*.

Policy EI3: Water Quality Management Plans

It is Council policy to implement Water Quality Management Plans for ground, surface, coastal and estuarine waters as part of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Policy EI16: Air and Noise Pollution

It is Council policy to implement the provisions of National and EU Directives on air and noise pollution and legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate.

Policy EI18: Water Pollution

It is Council policy to implement the provisions of water pollution abatement measures in accordance with National and EU Directives and legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate.

Additionally, the Environmental report on the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan contains the following mitigation measure:

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna I

No projects giving rise to significant direct, indirect or secondary impacts on Natura 2000 sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects)⁵.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna II

All subsequent plan-making and adoption of plans arising from this plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna III

The Council shall set up procedures to ensure compliance by plan-makers with the requirement of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive for land use plans.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna III

No ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity are to be lost without remediation as a result of implementation of the CDP.

Water Protection I

The Council shall address the significant water management issues identified in the Water Matters Consultation publications for the Eastern River Basin District.

Water Protection II

When adopted, the relevant policies and objectives of the Eastern River Basin Management Plan and associated Programme of Measures shall be integrated into the Plan through amendment or otherwise.

Water Protection III

The Council shall ensure that the ongoing development of the County is undertaken in such a way so as not to compromise the quality of surface water (and associated habitats and species) and groundwater.

Water Protection IV

Landuses shall not give rise to the pollution of ground or surface waters during the construction or operation of developments. This shall be achieved through the adherence to best practice in the design, installation and management of systems for the interception, collection and appropriate disposal or treatment of all surface waters and effluents.

Bathing Water I

The Council shall comply with the provisions of the Bathing Water Regulations to ensure that where any bathing water fails the mandatory bathing standards that the public are made aware of this fact by means of information notices posted at the bathing area.

Bathing Water II

The Council shall ensure compliance with Directive on bathing water (Directive 2006/7/EC) as implemented by the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 79) of 2008 and particular to:

- ensure bathing waters achieve "sufficient or better status by 2015".
- increase the number of bathing waters classified as "good or "excellent".

Waste Water I

Development under the Plan shall be preceded by sufficient capacity in the public waste water treatment plants and appropriate extensions in the existing public waste water treatment catchments.

⁵ Except as provided for in Section 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.

Waste Water II

The Council shall implement the relevant recommendations set out in *Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland for Population Equivalents Greater than 500 Persons – A Report for the Years 2006 and 2007* (EPA Office of Environment Enforcement, 2009).

Waste Water III

The Council shall examine the feasibility of connecting of unsewered, areas including individual properties/ premises, serviced by septic tanks to existing and planned sewer networks.

2.4 Cumulative Effects

The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 set the planning framework within which the CDP has been prepared with the objective of achieving an optimal balance of social, economic and physical development across the County. The effects of the higher level Strategy and Plan are considered insofar as they inform the CDP. Subsidiary plans and projects are subject to separate assessment procedures in accordance with all applicable Regulations and Directives.

Section 3 Natura 2000 Sites

3.1 Natura 2000 Sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area

Following guidance from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government all Natura 2000 sites within both the Plan area and an area extending 15km around it are considered. Eight Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and thirteen Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) occur. They are all mapped on Figure 1.

3.1.1 Special Protection Areas

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - by the DEHLG due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the European Union. SPAs in the County are:

North Bull Island SPA (Site Code 004006): This site is an excellent example of an estuarine complex and is one of the top sites in Ireland for wintering waterfowl. It is of international importance on account of both the total number of waterfowl and the individual populations of Lightbellied Brent Goose, Black-tailed Godwit and Bar-tailed Godwit that use it. Also of significance is the regular presence of several species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, notably Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit, but also Ruff and Short-eared Owl.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Pintail, Shoveler, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Knot, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone, 20,000 wintering waterbirds, Teal, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Sanderling, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Wetland & Waterbirds.

Baldoyle Bay SPA (Site Code 004016): This site has an internationally important population of Brent Geese and nationally important populations of a further seven species, including two which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The inner estuarine section is a Statutory Nature Reserve and is also designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The site is a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the E.U. Habitats Directive. The main threat to the birds is disturbance as it is located in a densely populated area.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Shelduck, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Wetland & Waterbirds.

South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site Code: 004024): The site comprises a substantial part of Dublin Bay. It includes the intertidal area between the River Liffey and Dún Laoghaire, and the estuary of the River Tolka to the north of the River Liffey, as well as Booterstown Marsh. A portion of the shallow marine waters of the bay is also included. The area is of international importance for Light-bellied Brent Goose and of national importance for nine other waterfowl species. As an autumn tern roost, it is also of international importance. Furthermore, the site supports a nationally important colony of Common Tern. All of the tern species using the site are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive, as are Bartailed Godwit and Mediterranean Gull. This site is also designated as a Ramsar site under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Knot, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Roseate Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Black-headed Gull, Wetland & Waterbirds.

Wicklow Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004040): This is an extensive upland site, comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. This site is of high ornithological importance as it supports very good examples of upland and woodland bird communities. Several of the species which occur are very rare at a national level. Two species, Ring Ouzel and Red Grouse, are Red-listed and their status is of high conservation concern. Also of note is that Merlin and Peregrine are both listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Merlin, Peregrine

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (Site Code: 004063): Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA, located in the western foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, was created in 1944 by damming of the River Liffey for the purpose of generating electricity from hydropower. The reservoir covers an area of approximately 20 km² and is the largest inland water body in the Mideast and south-east regions. The principal interest of the site is the Greylag Goose population, which is of international importance. A range of other wildfowl species also occurs, including Whooper Swan, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site is also notable as a winter roost for gulls, especially Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Greylag Goose, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wetland & Waterbirds.

Howth Head Coast SPA (Site Code 004113): This site is of high ornithological importance, with four seabird species having populations of national importance. It is also a traditional nesting site for Peregrine Falcon. The site is easily accessible and has important amenity and educational value due to its proximity to Dublin City.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Kittiwake.

Ireland's Eye SPA (Site Code 004117): This relatively small island is of high ornithological importance, with seven seabird species having populations of national importance. The regular presence of a breeding pair of Peregrine Falcon is also of note.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Cormorant, Herring Gull, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill.

The Murrough SPA (Site Code: 004186): The Murrough SPA comprises a coastal wetland complex that stretches for 13 km from Kilcoole Station, east of Kilcoole village in the north to Wicklow Town in the south, and extends inland for up to 1 km in places. The regular occurrence of Red-throated Diver, Little Egret, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Little Tern, Sandwich Tern, Short-eared Owl and Kingfisher is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site also supports a typical diversity of birds associated with reed swamp, including Reed Warbler, a very localised species in Ireland. The site is also of considerable importance for the wide range of coastal and freshwater habitats that it supports, including several that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Main conservation objective:

To maintain the special conservation interests for this SPA at favourable conservation status: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Little Tern, Red-throated Diver, Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull.

3.1.2 Special Areas of Conservation

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC), referred to as the Habitats Directive, by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European

Union. The sites are *candidate* sites because they are currently under consideration by the Commission of the European Union.

cSACs within 15km of the Plan area are:

Ballyman Glen cSAC (Site Code: 000713): Ballyman Glen is situated approximately 3 km north of Enniskerry. It is orientated in an east-west direction with a stream running through the centre. The presence of alkaline fen and of petrifying spring/seepage areas on the site is particularly notable, as these habitats are listed, the latter with priority status, on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion); Alkaline fens.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Bray Head cSAC (Site Code: 000714): This coastal site is situated in the north-east of Co. Wicklow between the towns of Bray and Greystones. Bray Head is of high conservation importance as it has good examples of two habitats (sea cliffs and dry heath) listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. It also supports a number of rare plant species and has ornithological importance.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; European dry heaths
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Carriggower Bog cSAC (Site Code: 000716): Carriggower Bog is situated on Calary plateau at the eastern edge of the Wicklow Mountains. The site is an area of wet bog and poor fen, flanked by the Vartry River on the south-western side. This site is a candidate SAC selected for transition mire, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Transition mires and quaking bogs.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Glen of the Downs cSAC (Site Code: 000719): This site is a semi-natural Oak wood situated within an impressive glacial overflow channel. It is located on the Dublin-Wexford road about 7 km south of Bray, Co. Wicklow. The site supports Oak woodland of a type that is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in British Isles.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Knocksink Wood cSAC (Site Code: 000725): Knocksink Wood is situated in the valley of the Glencullen River north-west of Enniskerry. The importance of this site lies in the diversity of woodland habitats which occur. The presence of rare or threatened plants and invertebrates adds to the interest. Much of this site has been designated a Statutory Nature Reserve and there is presently an educational centre within the site.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

4. Objective 1: To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion); Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*).
5. Objective 2: To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
6. Objective 3: To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Wicklow Mountains cSAC (Site Code: 002122): The vegetation provides examples of the typical upland habitats with heath, blanket bog and upland grassland covering large, relatively undisturbed areas. In all ten habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive are found within the site. Several rare, protected plant and animal species occur. This site is a complex of upland areas in Counties Wicklow and Dublin, flanked by Blessington Reservoir to the west and Vartry Reservoir in the east, Cruagh Mt. in the north and Lybagh Mt. in the south.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*; Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe); Blanket bog; Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (*Androsacetalia alpinae* and *Galeopsietalia ladani*); Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in British Isles.
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Lutra lutra*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and
5. relevant authorities.

The Murrough Wetlands cSAC (Site Code: 002249): This site is of importance as it is the largest coastal wetland complex on the east coast of Ireland. Although much affected by drainage, it still contains a wide range of coastal and freshwater habitats including five listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, some of which contain threatened plants. Areas on the site contain a rich invertebrate fauna, including several rarities. It is an important site for both wintering and breeding birds and supports a wide variety of species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Annual vegetation of drift lines; Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*); Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*); Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davalliana*; Alkaline fens.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Ireland's Eye cSAC (Site Code: 002193): This uninhabited marine island has a well developed maritime flora, with two habitats (sea cliffs and shingle) listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, and nationally important seabird colonies. Owing to its easy access and proximity to Dublin it has great educational and amenity value.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.

3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Baldoyle Bay cSAC (Site Code: 000199): Baldoyle Bay is a fine example of an estuarine system. It contains four habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive and has two legally protected plant species. The site is also an important bird area and part of it is a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive, as well as being a Statutory Nature Reserve. It supports internationally important numbers of Brent Geese and nationally important numbers of six other species including two Annex I Birds Directive species.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. Objective 1: To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*); Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*).
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Howth Head cSAC (Site Code 000202): Howth Head displays a fine range of natural habitats, including two Annex I habitats, within surprisingly close proximity to Dublin city. The site is also of scientific importance for its seabird colonies, invertebrates and lichens. It also supports populations of at least two legally protected plant species and several other scarce plants.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; European dry heaths.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

North Dublin Bay cSAC (Site Code 000206): This site is an excellent example of a coastal site with all the main habitats represented. The holds good examples of ten habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive; one of these is listed with priority status. Several of the wintering bird species have populations of international importance, while some of the invertebrates are of national importance. The site contains a numbers of rare and scarce plants including some which are legally protected. Its proximity to the capital city makes North Dublin Bay an excellent site for educational studies and research.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Annual vegetation of drift lines; Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*); Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*); Embryonic shifting dunes; Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes); Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes); Humid dune slacks.
2. To maintain the Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: *Petalophyllum ralfsii*.
3. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site
4. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

South Dublin Bay cSAC (Site Code 000210): This site is a fine example of a coastal system with extensive sand and mudflats, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. South Dublin Bay is also an internationally important bird site.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitat for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide.
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.

3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

Glenasmole Valley cSAC (Site Code 001209): Glenasmole Valley contains a high diversity of habitats and plant communities, including three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The presence of four Red Data Book plant species further enhances the value of the site as does the presence of populations of several mammal and bird species of conservation interest.

Draft Conservation Objectives:

1. To maintain the Annex I habitats for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco Brometalia*); *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*); Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*).
2. To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.
3. To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

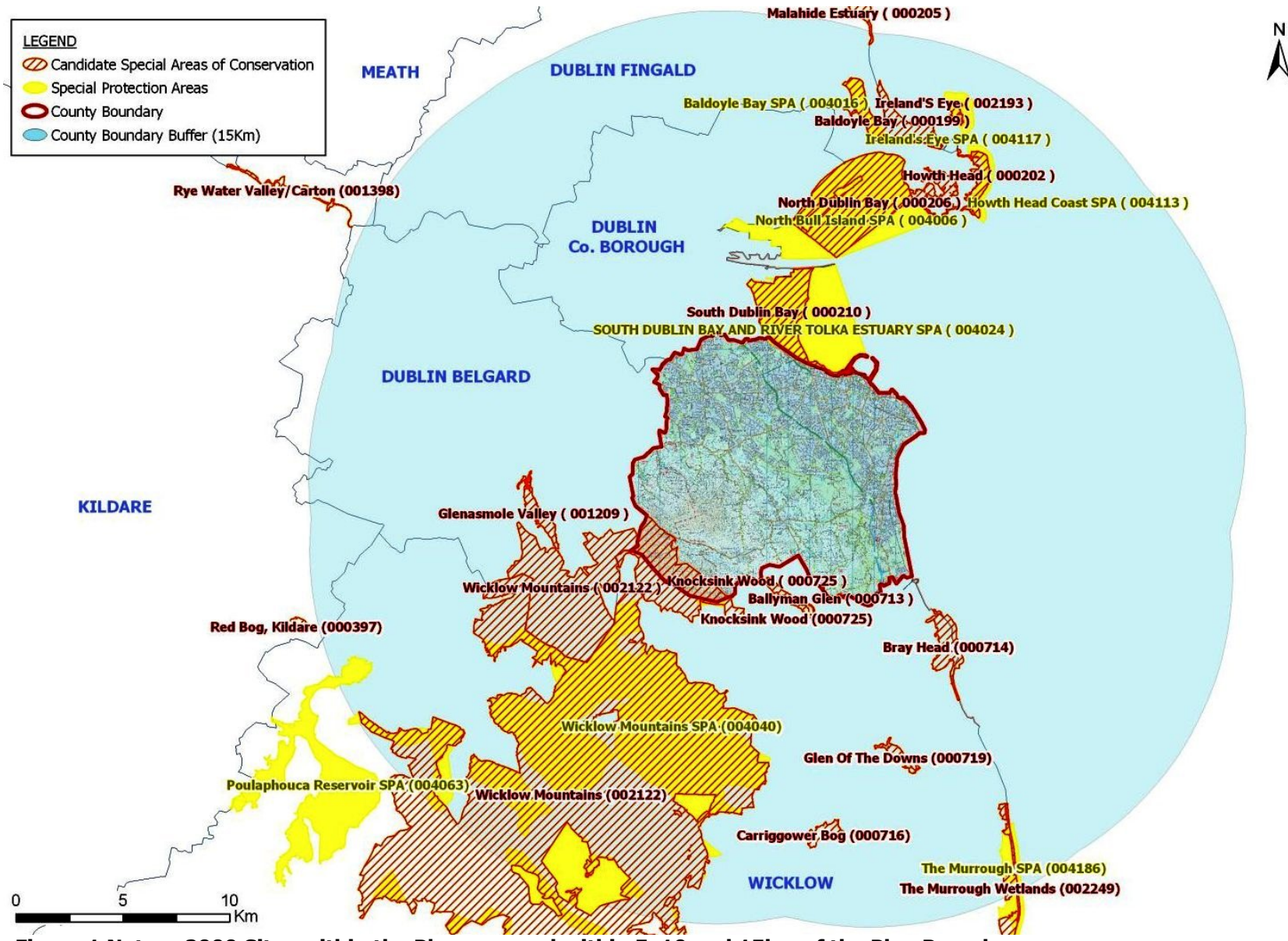


Figure 1 Natura 2000 Sites within the Plan area and within 5, 10 and 15km of the Plan Boundary

Section 4 Assessment Criteria

4.1 Elements of the Plan with potential to give rise to significant effects

A list of the individual policies and objectives of the Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) with potential to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites is included in the left hand column of the assessment tables contained in the accompanying Appendix.

These have been taken from Section 8 - *Evaluation of Plan Provisions* - of the Environmental Report which has been prepared as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process. In that evaluation each of the Plan's policies and objectives were evaluated against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) listed below:

SEO B1: To avoid loss of relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.

SEO B2: To avoid significant adverse impacts, including direct, cumulative and indirect impacts, to relevant habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites.

SEO B3: To sustain, enhance or - where relevant - prevent the loss of ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity.

Thus the policies and objectives which have been identified as having probable or potential conflict or uncertain interaction with these SEOs are further examined in this assessment.

4.2 Elements of Plan likely to cause impacts

The tables in the accompanying Appendix identify whether these policies and objectives are likely to cause any direct, indirect or secondary impacts (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the sites by assessing them against the sites' conservation objectives, as given in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 above.

Where potential impacts are identified, then avoidance/mitigation measures contained as policies or objectives within the Plan as well as other laws/standards/procedures are cited and it is determined whether there will be any residual impacts or not.

Section 5 Conclusions

5.1 Criteria for Assessment

On the basis of the above analysis it can be concluded that no projects that will cause significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan⁷ (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects), considering the following factors⁶:

- size and scale
- land-take
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site
- resource requirements (water abstraction etc.)
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air)
- excavation requirements
- transportation requirements
- duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.
- habitat area
- disturbance to key species
- habitat or species fragmentation
- species density
- changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.)
- climate change
- key relationships that define the structure of the sites
- key relationships that define the function of the site

Furthermore, such developments as will be permitted on foot of the provisions of this Plan shall be required to conform with the relevant regulatory provisions for the prevention of pollution, nuisance or other environmental effects.

5.2 Conclusion

The trigger for a Stage Two⁷ HDA would be if the Plan were likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. This screening report evaluates the Plan to see if it needs to be the subject of a Stage Two HDA. It finds that the Plan has been formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon the Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites⁷. Therefore, in accordance with the *Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, it is concluded that the Plan does not require any further assessment to demonstrate compliance with the Directive.

⁶ These factors have been taken from "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)"

⁷ ref. Section 1