

**PROPOSED VARIATION No. 4
OF
CASTLEBAR & ENVIRONS
DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2008-2014**

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report

In accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (Habitats Directive)



**MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CONTAE MHAIGH EO
OCTOBER 2016**

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Glossary and acronyms

GIS: Geographical Information System

HDA: Habitats Directive Assessment, an assessment undertaken in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) of the implications of a plan or project, either on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of the conservation objectives of that site

LBA: Local Biodiversity Areas

Natura 2000 Network: The assemblage of sites which are identified as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive or classified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC, or a Site of Community Importance (SCI)

NHA: Natural heritage area(s); an area which has been designated as such by way of a Natural Heritage Order under Section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, or that, pending a decision by the Minister under section 17 or 18 of the Act, is subject of a notice under Section 16 of that Act

NIR: Natura Impact Report; the report prepared following Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000 sites as required under the Habitats Directive which presents information on the assessment and the process of collating data on a **plan** and its potential significant impacts on Natura 2000 site(s).

NIS: Natura Impact Statement; the statement prepared following Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000 sites as required under the Habitats Directive which presents information on the assessment and the process of collating data on a **project** and its potential significant impacts on Natura 2000 site(s).

RAL: Remedial Action List for the purpose of identifying issues to be remedied within public water supplies

SEA: Strategic environmental assessment; a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations

WFD: Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (the Water Framework Directive)

WRBD: Western River Basin District; one of eight River Basin Districts which have been designated as hydrological or geographical units for Ireland (Ecoregion 17) using a spatial management system.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report pertains to the proposal to make a variation to the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014. The Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 was adopted in on 1st May 2008 and took effect from 29th June 2008. The Plan, as adopted, addressed the proper planning and sustainable development of the town and was envisaged to operate for a period of six years from the date it came into force. (this period has been extended to 2020.) The Plan sets out a strategy and framework for the future development of the town and provides the overall policies of the Town and County Councils with regard to the future of the town, in addition to more detailed objectives and standards for development control.

Section 28 of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 requires planning authorities to vary the development plan by amending the wording of objective (h) in the mandatory objectives to be included in a development plan set out in Section 10 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2015 and to make provision for the designation of lands within which a Vacant Sites Levy can be applied where it is determined that development of the site is beneficial towards securing the objectives of the core strategy, housing strategy and retail strategy of the county.

Mayo County Council proposes to vary the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 to incorporate the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.

1.2 Legislation and biodiversity impact assessment

Mayo County Council has determined that in accordance with Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, a Screening for Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken. This Screening Report is prepared to ensure that the proposed project and particulars, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have significant impacts on the integrity of designated habitats and species within or adjacent to the project area, with respect to their specific conservation objectives and, consequently, will determine whether or not a full Appropriate Assessment is required.

From a legislative viewpoint, the Councils Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (henceforth referred to as the Habitats Directive) was introduced, primarily, to promote sustainable development within EU member states while concurrently maintaining, or whenever necessary, restoring the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species as defined within the legislation.

The Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997) and subsequently amended in 1998 and 2005. However, in order to address transposition issues raised in judgements of the ECJ against Ireland in 2008 and to clarify the obligations of planning authorities under the Birds and Habitats Directives, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 were introduced and now provide the legislative framework in Ireland on the protection of designated habitats and species.

The designation or classification of sites are done so under the provision of the Natura 2000 network; essentially a list of sites which are deemed of particular importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and / or species. In Ireland, Natura 2000 sites include candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)¹, Special Protection Areas (SPA), and proposed Special

¹ It should be stated at this point that all SACs in Ireland are currently candidate SACs but this does not alter or influence the sites' full protection by law

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Protection Areas (pSPA). cSACs pertain to qualifying interests which are habitats in Annex I and species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, while SPAs are selected for special conservation interests including regularly occurring migratory bird species and Annex I bird species and their habitats. The conservation objectives of particular Natura 2000 sites have been assigned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; these are the objectives or aims which have been put in place in order to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status or condition of the Annex I habitat or Annex I or II species for which the designated or classified site has been selected.

From the viewpoint of appropriate assessment, Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive subsumes assessment responsibility for the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) under the umbrella of Natura 2000 sites (European sites or sites within the Natura 2000 network), which include both Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), while nationally, appropriate assessment is dealt with in Part 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011.

1.3 Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive introduced the concept of appropriate assessment which is essentially the assessment of the implications of a plan or project, either on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of the conservation objectives of that site. Specifically Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the aforementioned directive govern the particulars of the concepts and terminology of appropriate assessments as follows:

Article 6(3) – *Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to **appropriate assessment** of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.*

Article 6(4) - *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 a 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.

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment was carried out on the proposed variation of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 with reference to the following European, national and DEHLG guidance documents on Habitats Directive Assessment:

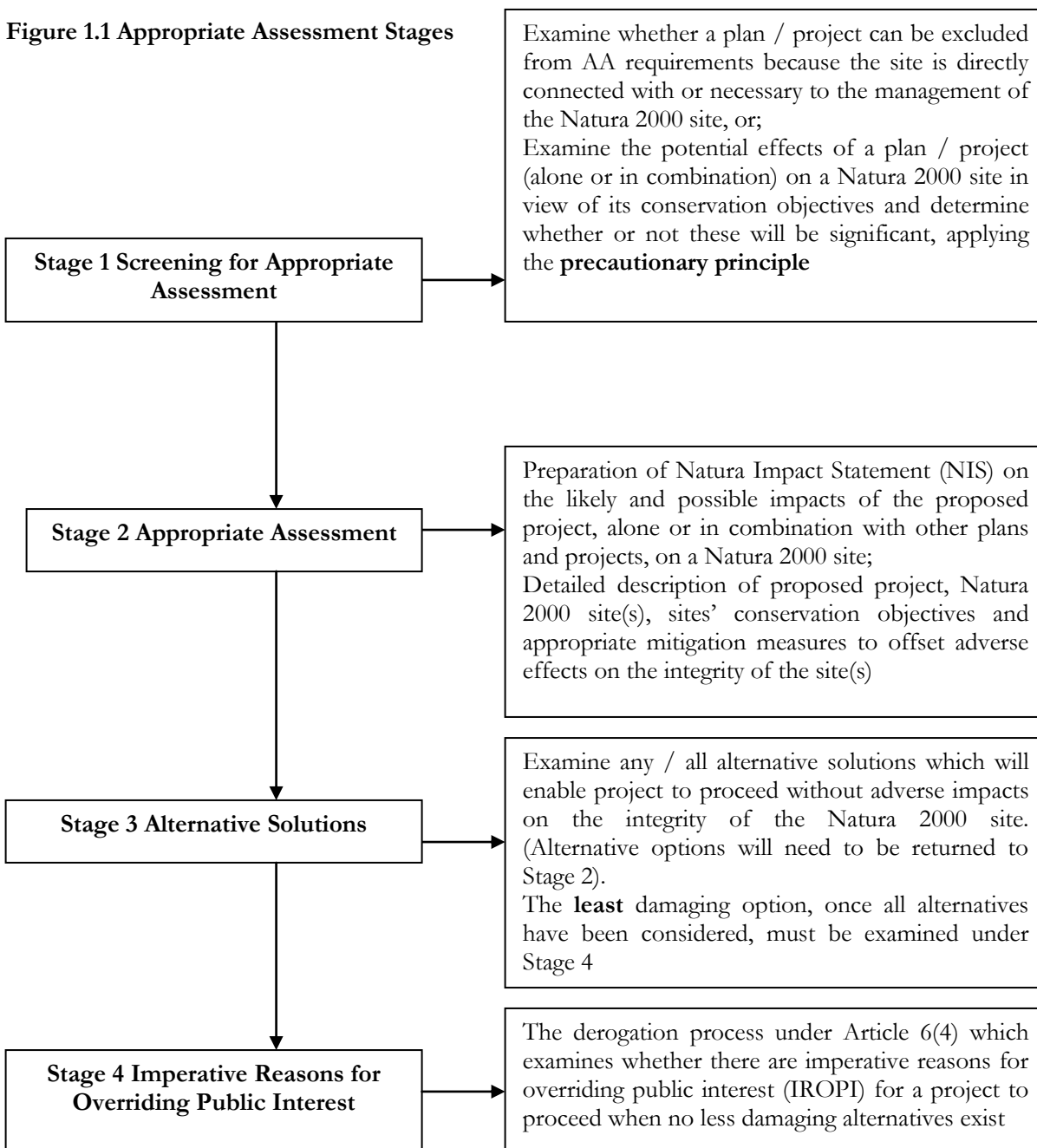
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities.* DoEHLG, 2009;
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites; Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habits Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission, 2002;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter PD 2/07 and NPWS 1/07, 2007;

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- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08, February 2008;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10, 2010;
- EPA, 2010. *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment; Streamlining AA, SEA and ELA process*. Best Practice Guidance 2010-B-DS-4 STRIVE Report;
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites, The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, 2000.

The following flow diagram summarises the principle stages involved in the appropriate assessment process and follows the commission's methodical guidance which promotes a four-stage process:

Figure 1.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages



Essentially, the appropriate assessment process is an iterative one and the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. To summarise, while the first two stages (1 and 2) focus on the draft plan or project and its potential adverse effects on the conservation objectives of a proximate Natura 2000 Network, Stage 3 examines alternative solutions to prevent adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. Stage 4 of appropriate assessment, also deemed a derogation process, is employed when it has been established that the draft plan or project will have adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 sites, but no less damaging alternative solution exists.

2 Methodology

2.1 Stages of screening

Forming the basis of an Appropriate Assessment (AA), screening is the introductory stage which yields important information regarding the project or plan and whether it, during its various phases and on its own or in combination with other plans or projects has the capacity to impact on the integrity of one or more Natura 2000 sites in by virtue of their conservation objectives. Screening, then, is an integral part of the AA process since it, applying the precautionary principle and utilising existing information, in addition to advice from relevant statutory bodies, is the decision stage for continuation with a full AA or the termination of the process at the screening stage due to a finding of no significant effects.

The screening process, as documented in this screening document, consists of four separate steps, with each step following into the next. The steps include:

1. A determination of whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
2. Description of the proposed project and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site(s);
3. Identification of the potential effects on the Natura 2000 site(s); and
4. Assessment of the significance of any effects on the Natura 2000 site(s).

2.2 Is the proposed project or plan directly connected to the Natura 2000 site(s)

The proposed variation to the development plan is not deemed to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site(s) it will not include management measures specifically for conservation purposes that are solely conceived for the conservation management of a Natura 2000 site(s) and not direct or indirect consequences of other activities.

As a consequence of this conclusion, this screening assessment advances to Step 2.

2.3 Description of the Proposed Variation No. 4 (To incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015 regarding the vacant site levy and urban renewal & regeneration).

The Proposed Variation No.4 of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 consists of:

- the inclusion of the amended wording of the mandatory objective set out in Section 10(2)(h) of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2015 as follows;

“the development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration ... in order to prevent –

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(i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,
(ii) urban blight and decay,
(iii) anti-social behaviour or
(iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses”.

- incorporation of designated areas into the development plan to which the Vacant Site Levy can be applied.

The Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 (To incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015 regarding the vacant site levy and urban renewal & regeneration) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 sites, therefore consideration was given to whether it has the potential to have significant effects on any European Site and what the implications for the conservation objectives of the site would be.

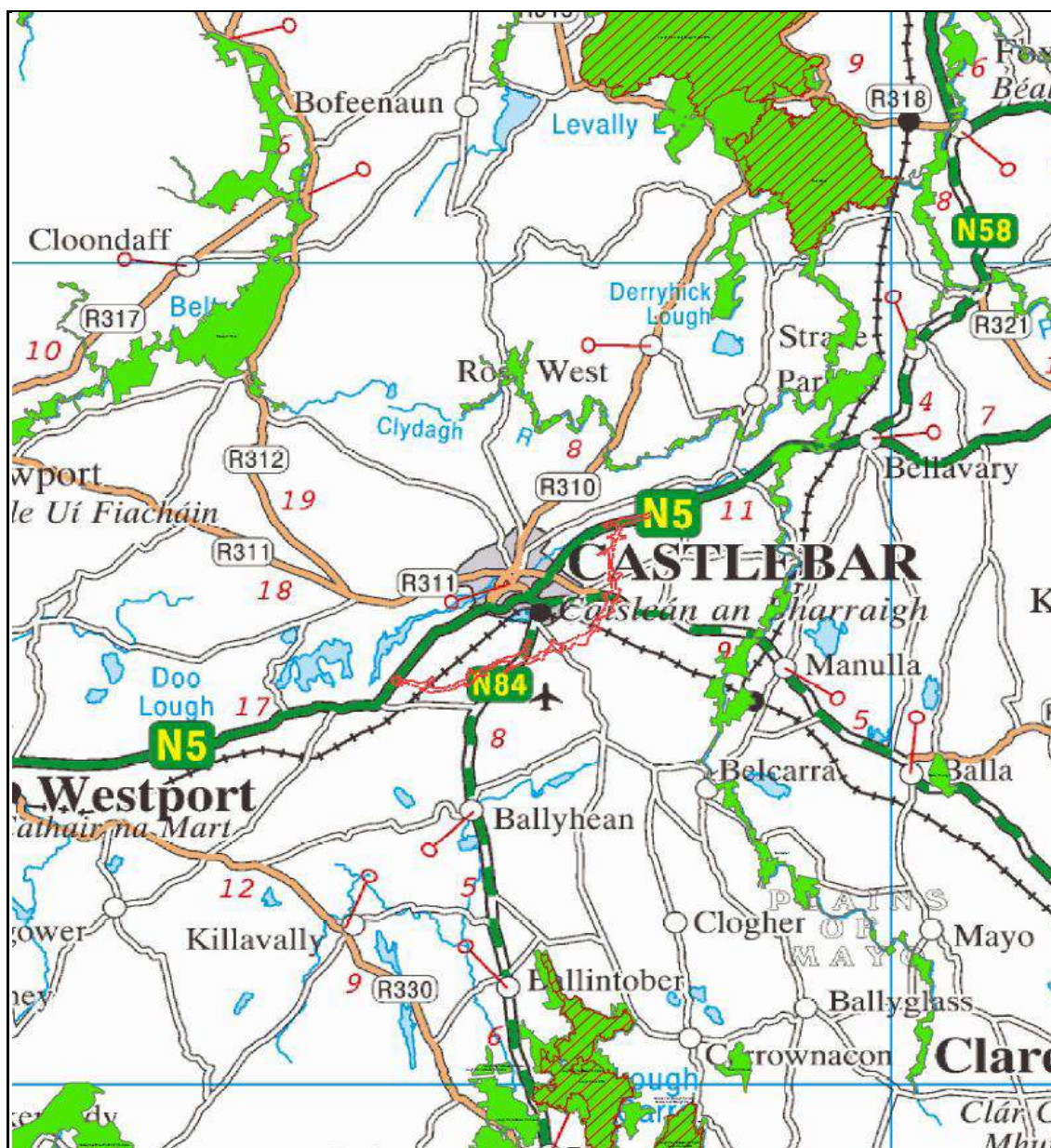
All elements of the Proposed Variation are examined to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Plan, in view of best scientific knowledge, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites.

3 Background Information on Natura 2000 sites

3.1 Introduction

For the purpose of this assessment, and in consideration of the 2009 DoEHLG guidelines on *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities* and expert judgement², a 15 km buffer / zone of influence was assigned around the proposed project location and a total of seven Natura 2000 sites are identified within the 15 km zone of influence. These are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Natura 2000 sites within 15Km of Castlebar



² A distance of 15 km is currently recommended in the case of plans, derived from UK guidance and general methodology.

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3.2 Description of Natura 2000 sites

There are a total of seven Natura 2000 sites within the proposed project 15 km buffer zone, five candidate Special Areas of Conservation and two Special Protection Areas, all designated in consideration of Habitats Directive Annex I habitats and Annex II species for SACs or, in the case of SPAs, special conservation interests in accordance with the EU Birds Directive. The following table illustrates the Natura 2000 sites considered for the purpose of this assessment which may be potentially affected by the proposed variation.

Table 3.1 Information pertaining Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed variation to the Castlebar & Environs Plan.

Site code	Natura 2000 Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [], * denotes priority habitat)
002298	River Moy cSAC	[1092] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> [1095] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> [1096] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water) [1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> [7110] * Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7230] Alkaline fens [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91E0] * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno - Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)
000463	Balla Turlough cSAC	[3180] * Turloughs
002144	Newport River cSAC	[1029] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i>
002081	Ballinafad cSAC	[1303] <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat)
001774 004051	Lough Carra/Mask Complex cSAC Lough Carra SPA	[3110] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3130] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea</i>

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		<p>uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</p> <p>[3140] Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp.</p> <p>[4030] European dry heaths</p> <p>[6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)*</p> <p>[7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae*</p> <p>[7230] Alkaline fens</p> <p>[8240] Limestone pavements*</p> <p>91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*</p> <p>[1303] <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat)</p> <p>[1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)</p> <p>[1393] <i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i> (Slender Green Feather-moss)</p> <p>[A182] <i>Larus canus</i> (Common Gull)</p>
004228	Lough Conn/Lough Cullin SPA	<p><i>Aythya fuligula</i> (tufted duck)</p> <p><i>Melanitta nigra</i> (common scoter)</p> <p><i>Larus canus</i> (common gull)</p> <p><i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> (Greenland white-fronted goose)</p> <p>Wetlands</p>
002179	Towerhill House cSAC	<p>[1303] <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat)</p>

3.3 Conservation Objectives

The assessment of all seven Natura 2000 sites and impacts thereon as a consequence of the proposed project necessitates examination of the qualifying interests and special conservation interests for which the Natura 2000 sites have been designated or classified.

The conservation objectives of all Natura 2000 sites are for the maintenance or restoration of qualifying interests or special conservation interests species at favourable conservation status.

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

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

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is it 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.

4 Identification of Effects

4.1 Potential effects on Natura 2000 sites as a consequence of the proposed project

As shown in Table 3.1, a number of qualifying interests and special conservation interests which may be adversely impacted by environmental change or deterioration as a consequence of the proposed project are identified in this assessment. These include terrestrial, aquatic and water-dependant habitats and species.

The following screening matrices have been completed with reference to the format of Figure 1, Annex 2 of *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites; Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2002) to illustrate the assessment of potential significant effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites by virtue of the proposed variation.

Table 4.1, 4.2 and 4.2 describes the effects on the integrity of each of the Natura 2000 sites as a consequence of the proposed variation, at all stages and Table 4.3 describes the likely changes to the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, by virtue of the proposed variation.

The Proposed Variation of the Plan is being made to address the urban renewal & regeneration to generally assist in the betterment and sustainable development of urban areas by ensuring that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, and to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.

While the Proposed Variation would therefore appear to be very positive from the perspective of the environment, it is still necessary to identify any significant effects as a consequence of making the variation. This section examines each change to the adopted Plan in a bid to identify any potential significant effects on any European site, individually or in combination with another plan or project.

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Table 4.1 Identification of Effects on one or more European site.

Ref. no. ³	Text Changes in the plan as adopted	Are Significant Effects on European sites envisaged? Y/N? Explain.
VC.T1	<p>Page 5/Castlebar & Environs Development Plan (CDP), Introduction - Reword statutory objective h: of section 1.10 The Statutory Objectives</p> <p>h) the development and renewal of areas in need of regeneration</p> <p>h) the development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent –</p> <p>(i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of ruinous or neglected condition of any land,</p> <p>(ii) urban blight and decay</p> <p>(iii) anti-social behavior or</p> <p>(iv) a shortage of habital houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential or other uses</p> <p>Future development in Castlebar will also be encouraged and promoted through the development management process and other available tools and mechanisms, including the Vacant Site Levy (in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015) in order to facilitate and encourage appropriate development of vacant sites on lands identified as "Regeneration lands" and "Residential lands" on the map 6 titled "Residential & Regeneration Lands"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No.</p> <p>The measures set out in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 will ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.</p> <p>The development of sustainable urban settlements will reduce pressures on infrastructure including water, wastewater and roads in rural areas which would otherwise be likely to indirectly adversely affect European sites.</p>

³ Where V refers to text changes in Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020 Volume 1 and M refers to changes to Maps.

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VC.T2	<p>Page 24/Castlebar & Environs Development Plan (CDP), Development Strategy - Add new bullet point to end of section 4.2 Overall Development Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future development in Castlebar will also be encouraged and promoted through the development management process and other available tools and mechanisms, including the Vacant Site Levy (in accordance with the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015) in order to facilitate and encourage appropriate development of vacant sites on lands identified as "Regeneration lands" and "Residential lands" on the map 6 titled "Residential & Regeneration Lands" 	<p style="text-align: center;">No.</p> <p>The measures set out in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 will ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.</p> <p>The development of sustainable urban settlements will reduce pressures on infrastructure including water, wastewater and roads in rural areas which would otherwise be likely to indirectly adversely affect European sites.</p>
VC.T3	<p>Page 29/Castlebar & Environs Development Plan (CDP), Housing (Introduction) - Add new objective HO-6 at end of General Housing Objectives Section and renumber the remaining HO objectives accordingly.</p> <p>HO-6</p> <p>It is an objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate the development of vacant and undeveloped residential lands through the use of all available tools and mechanisms, including the Vacant Site Levy, in order to support implementation of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy and the Interim Housing Strategy.</p> <p>In this regard, residential lands where the Vacant Site Levy may be applied include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Phase 1 Residential lands in Castlebar and 2. Any other residential zoned lands on which there is planning permission in respect of which substantial works 	<p style="text-align: center;">No.</p> <p>The measures set out in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 will ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.</p> <p>The development of sustainable urban settlements will reduce pressures on infrastructure including water, wastewater and roads in rural areas which would otherwise be likely to indirectly adversely affect European sites.</p>

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	<p>have not been carried out within 3 years of the date of permission.</p> <p>These areas are shown on map 6 titled "Residential and Regeneration Lands"</p>	
VC.T4	<p>Page 100/Castlebar & Environs Development Plan (CDP), Town Centre (Urban Form) - Add new objective TCO-3 after TCO-2 Urban Form: and renumber the remaining TCO objectives accordingly.</p> <p>TCO 3 It is an objective of the Council to encourage and facilitate the development and renewal of areas, identified having regard to the core strategy, that are in need of regeneration in Castlebar through the use of all available tools and mechanisms, including the Vacant Site Levy (as provided for under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015), in order to prevent —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, (ii) urban blight and decay, (iii) anti-social behaviour, or (iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses. <p>In this regard, the following areas are identified for the purpose of renewal and regeneration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lands zoned as Town Centre 2. Other lands immediately adjoining the Town Centre zoning, the development of which would support renewal and regeneration. 	<p style="text-align: center;">No.</p> <p>The measures set out in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 will ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.</p> <p>The development of sustainable urban settlements will reduce pressures on infrastructure including water, wastewater and roads in rural areas which would otherwise be likely to indirectly adversely affect European sites.</p>

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	These areas are shown on map 6 titled "Residential and Regeneration Lands"	
VC.M1	<p>Add new map showing Residential and Regeneration lands within which the vacant site levy may be applied in accordance with the Urban Housing & Regeneration Act 2015.</p> <p>Add new Map 6 Residential & Regeneration Lands</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No.</p> <p>The measures set out in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015 will ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use, while also ensuring a more efficient return on State investment in enabling infrastructure and helping to counter unsustainable urban sprawl.</p> <p>The development of sustainable urban settlements will reduce pressures on infrastructure including water, wastewater and roads in rural areas which would otherwise be likely to indirectly adversely affect European sites.</p>

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Table 4.2 Potential significant impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 site(s) arising from the proposed project

Natura 2000 Site	Direct impacts	Indirect / secondary	Size / scale	Land-take	Distance from site	Resource requirements	Emissions	Excavation requirements	Transportation	Duration of construction, & operation
River Moy cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Balla Turlough cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Newport River cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Ballinafad cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Lough Carra/ Mask Complex cSAC Lough Carra SPA	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Lough Conn/ Lough Cullin SPA	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Towerhill House cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged

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Table 4.2 Likely changes to the integrity of Natura 2000 site(s) by virtue of the proposed project

Site name	Reduction of habitat area	Disturbance to key species	Habitat or species fragmentation	Reduction in species density	Changes in key indicators of conservation value	Climate change
River Moy cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Balla Turlough cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Newport River cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Ballinafad cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Lough Carra/Mask Complex cSAC Lough Carra SPA	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Lough Conn/Lough Cullin SPA	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
Towerhill House cSAC	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged

From the analysis of effects on all seven Natura 2000 sites in addition to an examination of likely changes as a consequence of the proposed variation, it was concluded that there is no conceivable likelihood of the, River Moy cSAC, Balla Turlough cSAC, Newport River cSAC, Ballinafad cSAC, Lough Carra/Mask Complex cSAC & Lough Carra SPA, Lough Conn/Lough Cullin SPA, Towerhill House cSAC, being affected by the proposed variation. This is due to the nature of the proposed amendments to the Castlebar Plan and in addition to the distance of the plan area to these Natura 2000 sites. Hence, the only identified ecological receptor for the purpose of this assessment is the River Moy cSAC, due to its location, partly within the Plan area boundary.

Site-specific conservation objectives for the River Moy cSAC were published in August 2016. The following table illustrates the examination of site-specific conservation objectives for the qualifying interests of the River Moy cSAC and considers the likelihood of adverse effects.

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Table 4.3 Examination of site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) for qualifying interests of the River Moy cSAC

Qualifying interests	Site-specific conservation objectives (SSCO)	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed project alone and in combination, in view of SSCI targets and attributes for qualifying interests
[1092] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of White-clawed Crayfish in River Moy SAC.	The proposed variation to the Castlebar and Environs Plan 2008-2014, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the River Moy, which may indirectly adversely affect the conservation status of this aquatic species
[1095] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Sea Lamprey in River Moy SAC.	The proposed variation to the Castlebar and Environs Plan 2008-2014, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the River Moy which may indirectly adversely affect the conservation status of this aquatic species
[1096] <i>Lampetra planeri</i>	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Brook Lamprey in River Moy SAC.	The proposed variation to the Castlebar and Environs Plan 2008-2014, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the River Moy which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this aquatic species
[1106] <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salmon in River Moy SAC.	The proposed variation to the Castlebar and Environs Plan 2008-2014, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the River Moy which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this aquatic species
[1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i>	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in River Moy SAC.	The proposed variation to the Castlebar and Environs Plan 2008-2014, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the River Moy or cause additional disturbance by human presence which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this water-dependant species
[7110] * Active raised bogs	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Active raised bogs in River Moy SAC.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects
[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Not currently available.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects
[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>	Not currently available.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects

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[7230] Alkaline fens	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of alkaline fens in River Moy SAC.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects
[91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles in River Moy SAC.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects
[91E0] * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno - Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) in River Moy SAC.	There is no link between the proposed variation and this Annex I habitat which would result in potential for significant effects

It is not envisaged that the Annex I habitats for which the River Moy cSAC is designated will be affected by the proposed amendments to the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan outlined in the proposed variation document.

The Annex II species for which the Natura 2000 site was designated are all aquatic or water-dependant so their disturbance or negative effects would in general have to follow an aquatic route from proposed plan variation location to the nearest water course that is linked to the River Moy cSAC. It is not considered probable, by virtue of the nature of the amendments proposed to the Castlebar & Environs Plan, that the proposed variation will impact negatively on the integrity of the River Moy cSAC in view of its conservation objectives.

4.2 Significance of effects on Natura 2000 sites

A significant effect of a plan on a Natura 2000 site according to national guidance on Appropriate Assessment (DoEHLG, 2009) is one which is likely to undermine any of the site's conservation objectives and typical examples of significant impacts include:

- Loss of Annex I habitat area;
- Disturbance to species population density;
- Direct / indirect damage to the physical quality of the environment;
- Causing serious / ongoing disturbance to habitats for which the Natura 2000 site was selected; and
- Reduction / fragmentation of the habitat area.

The proposed variation, as indicated previously and shown in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 was described as not likely to result in changes to the integrity of the seven Natura 2000 sites considered in this assessment. In terms of significant effects, none were deemed likely, but in order to rule out the possibility of indirect effects on one Natura 2000 site, further examination of the conservation objectives of the qualifying interests of the River Moy were undertaken. Upon further examination, as outlined in Section 4.1 and particularly Table 4.3 the likelihood of significant effects on the integrity of the River Moy cSAC, in view of the site's conservation objectives are not considered likely by virtue of the nature of the proposed amendments to the Ballina Plan.

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not considered necessary.

5 Conclusion of Stage 1 Screening

5.1 Introduction

It has been demonstrated that the proposed variation will not impact the River Moy SAC due to its location partially within the Castlebar and Environs Plan boundary. No other SACs are predicted to be affected by the proposed variation, due to the nature of the proposed amendments, distance from the Natura 2000 sites, size and scale of the proposal or the type of qualifying interests associated with each site. The River Moy SAC, occupying a large area of Mayo and Sligo 154 km² has been designated in consideration of five Annex II species and six Annex I habitats.

As a consequence of the modest nature of the proposed amendments, absence of any Annex I habitats/Annex II species, the distance from Natura 2000 sites and indirect links to Natura 2000 sites, modest emissions and the absence of resources, it is not envisaged that there will be significant adverse effects on the integrity of the River Moy cSAC, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

5.2 Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix

The following table has been prepared with reference to the format *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites; Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2002) to illustrate the detailed assessment of the Findings of No Significant Effects (FONSE) on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites by virtue of the proposed variation.

Table 5.1 Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix

Name of project or plan	Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Castlebar & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014
Name and location of Natura 2000 sites	Full list of Natura 2000 sites illustrated in Figure 3.1, and listed in Table 3.1
Description of the project or plan	The Land use plan, in this case a variation of a development plan ⁴ proposed by Mayo County Council to incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015 regarding the vacant site levy and urban renewal & regeneration into the plan on a formal basis.
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?	No, the proposed variation is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site(s) (provide details)?	It is not envisaged that any other plan or project will result in negative cumulative or in-combination effects on any of the Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed variation which is deemed very modest in nature.

⁴ Section 177R (1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

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Assessment of significance of effects	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.	It is considered that the proposed variation (alone or in combination) <u>will not</u> affect any Natura 2000 site(s) in a negative way, by virtue of nature of the proposed amendments.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant.	Minor effects envisaged on the surrounding environment are not considered to impact on the Natura 2000 network as no land-take, loss, fragmentation, reduction in species density or habitat reduction or fragmentation is predicted as a consequence of the proposed variation, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.
Data collected to carry out the Screening Assessment	
Who carried out the Assessment	Iain Douglas Forward Planning Section Mayo County Council
Sources of data	Guidance documents listed in Section 1.3 in addition to assessment of National Biodiversity Data Centre (DoAHtG) species mapping, NPWS database (Natura 2000 site synopses, Standard Data Form and conservation objectives), Mayo County Council GIS data (NPWS/EPA species records, OSi and Western River Basin District) and other documents / papers as listed in References Section
Level of assessment	Desktop study
Where can the full results of the Assessment Screening be accessed and viewed?	Forward Planning Section, Mayo County Council
Overall Conclusion	

There is one Natura 2000 site considered, the River Moy cSAC, but it is not envisaged that the proposed variation of the Castlebar & Environs Plan 2008-2014 will give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, alone and in combination with other plans and projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives. Adverse effects on the River Moy SAC are not envisaged as a consequence of the proposed variation due to the nature of the amendments which are considered minor.

It is not considered necessary to proceed to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

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- NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
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Appendix I

Site Synopsis – River Moy cSAC

Site Name: River Moy SAC

Site Code: 002298

This site comprises almost the entire freshwater element of the River Moy and its tributaries including both Loughs Conn and Cullin. The system drains a catchment area of 805 sq. km. Most of the site is in Co. Mayo, though parts are in west Sligo and north Roscommon. Apart from the Moy itself, other rivers included within the site are the Deel, Bar Deela, Castlehill, Addergoole, Clydagh and Manulla on the west side, and the Glenree, Yellow, Strade, Gweestion, Trimogue, Sonnagh, Mullaghanoe, Owengarve, Eighnagh and Owenaher on the east side. The underlying geology is Carboniferous Limestone for the most part, though Carboniferous Sandstone is present at the extreme west of the site, with Dalradian Quartzites and schists at the south-west. Some of the tributaries at the east, the south of Lough Conn and all of Lough Cullin are underlain by granite. There are many towns adjacent to but not within the site. These include Ballina, Crossmolina, Foxford, Swinford, Kiltimagh and Charlestown.

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

- | |
|--|
| <p>[7110] Raised Bog (Active)*
[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation
[7230] Alkaline Fens
[91A0] Old Oak Woodlands
[91E0] Alluvial Forests*</p> <p>[1092] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)
[1095] Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)
[1096] Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)
[1106] Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)
[1355] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</p> |
|--|

On the slopes and rising ground around the southern shores of Loughs Conn and Cullin, oak woodlands are found. Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) is the dominant tree species, with an understorey of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), with some Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Additional species are associated with the lakeshore such as Rock Whitebeam (*Sorbus rupicola*), Aspen (*Populus tremula*), Silver Birch (*B. pendula*) and the shrubs Guelder-rose

(*Viburnum opulus*), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*) and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). The ground flora is usually composed of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), buckler-ferns (*Dryopteris aemula* and *D. dilatata*), Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*), Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The rare Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*), protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occurs in association with the woodlands. Also found in these woodlands is the snail *Spermodea lamellata*, a species associated with old natural woodlands.

Alluvial woodland occurs at several locations along the shores of the lakes but is particularly well developed along the river at Coryosla Bridge. Principal tree species are willows (including *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Herbaceous species include Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). The woods are flooded by seasonal fluctuations in lake level.

On higher ground adjacent to the woodlands is blanket bog with scattered shrubs and trees on the drier areas. The rocky knolls often bear Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) or Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), with some unusual rare herb species such as Intermediate Wintergreen (*Pyrola media*) and Lesser Twayblade (*Listera cordata*).

Within the site are a number of raised bogs including those at Kilgarriff, Gowlaun, Derrynabrock, Tawnaghbeg and Cloongoonagh. These are examples of raised bogs at the north-western edge of the spectrum and possess many of the species typical of such in Ireland, including an abundance of Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and the moss *Campylopus atrovirens*. Some of the bogs include significant areas of active raised bog habitat. Well developed pool and hummock systems with quaking mats of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Bog Asphodel and White Beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) are present. Many of the pools contain a diversity of plant species, including Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *Campylopus atrovirens*, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and occasional Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*). Several of the hummock-forming mosses (*Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*) which occur here are quite rare in this region and add to the scientific interest of the bogs within the overall site.

Depressions on the bogs, pool edges and erosion channels, where the vegetation is dominated by White Beaked-sedge comprise the habitat 'Rhynchosporion vegetation'. Associated species in this habitat at the site include Bog Asphodel, sundews, Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge.

Degraded raised bog is present where the hydrology of the uncut bogs has been affected by peat cutting and other land use activities in the surrounding area, such as afforestation and associated drainage, and also the Moy arterial drainage. Species typical of the active raised bog habitat may still be present but the relative abundances differ. A typical example of the degraded habitat, where drying has

occurred at the edge of the high bog, contains an abundance and more uniform cover of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge, Deergrass and sometimes Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). Occurring in association with the uncut high bog are areas of wet regenerating cutover bog with species such as Common Cottongrass, bog mosses and sundew, while on the drier areas, the vegetation is mostly dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Natural regeneration with peat-forming capability will be possible over time with some restorative measures.

Alkaline fen is considered to be well developed within the site. An extensive stand occurs as part of a wetland complex at Mannin and Island Lakes on the Glore River. Key diagnostic species of the *Schoenus* association characteristic of rich fens include the bryophytes *Campylium stellatum*, *Aneura pinguis* and *Scorpidium scorpioides*, and the herbaceous species Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*). Other fen species include Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Purple Moor-grass, Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*). The rare moss *Bryum uliginosum* occurs on exposed marl at a ditch to the east of Island Lake.

The open water of Loughs Conn and Cullin is moderately hard with relatively low colour and good transparency. The phytoplankton of the lake is dominated by diatoms and blue-green algae and there is evidence that the latter group is more common now than in former years. This indicates that nutrient inflow is occurring. The changes in Lough Conn appear to represent an early phase in the eutrophication process. Stoneworts still present include *Chara aspera*, *C. delicatula* and *Nitella cf. opaca*. Other plants found in the shallower portions include pondweed species (*Potamogeton* spp.). Where there is a peat influence Intermediate Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*) is characteristic, while Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*) often grows in sand. Narrow reedbeds and patches of Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) occur in some of the bays.

Drainage of the Moy in the 1960s lowered the level of the lakes, exposing wide areas of stony shoreline and wet grassland, which are liable to flooding in winter. This increased the habitat diversity of the shoreline and created a number of marginal wetlands, including fens and marshes. Plant species of note in the lake-margin include Heath Cudweed (*Omalotheca sylvatica*), Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and Irish Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*). These three species are listed on the Irish Red Data list and are protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

Other habitats present within the site include wet grassland dominated by rushes (*Juncus* spp.) grading into species-rich marsh in which sedges are common. Among the other species found in this habitat are Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*).

Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) scrub and pockets of wet woodland dominated by Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) have become established in places throughout the site. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) are common in

the latter and the ground flora is typical of wet woodland with Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Yellow Iris, horsetails (*Equisetum* spp.) and occasional tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*).

Small pockets of conifer plantation, close to the lakes and along the strip both sides of the rivers, are included in the site.

The Moy system is one of Ireland's premier salmon waters and it also encompasses two of Ireland's best lake trout fisheries in Loughs Conn and Cullin. Although the Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) is still fished commercially in Ireland, it is considered to be endangered or locally threatened elsewhere in Europe and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The Moy is a most productive catchment in salmon terms and this can be attributed to its being a fingered system with a multiplicity of 1st to 5th order tributaries which are large enough to support salmonids < 2 years of age while at the same time being too small to support significant adult trout numbers and are therefore highly productive in salmonid nursery terms.

Salmon run the Moy every month of the year. Both multi-sea-winter fish and grilse are present. The salmon fishing season is 1st February to 30th September. The peak of the spring fishing is in April and the grilse begin running in early May. The average weight of the spring fish is 9 lb and the grilse range from about 3-7 lb. In general spring fish are found more frequently in the rivers at the western extent of the Moy system.

The Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*), an interesting relict species from the last ice age, which is listed as threatened in the Irish Red Data Book has been recorded from Lough Conn and in only a few other lakes in Ireland. The latest reports suggest that it may now have disappeared from the site.

The site is also important for the presence of four other species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, namely Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, Otter and White-clawed Crayfish. The Sea Lamprey is regularly encountered in the lower stretches of the river around Ballina, while the Otter and White-clawed Crayfish are widespread throughout the system. In addition, the site also supports many of the mammal species occurring in Ireland. Those which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book include Pine Marten, Badger, Irish Hare and Daubenton's Bat. Common Frog, another Red Data Book species, also occurs within the site.

Loughs Conn and Cullin support important concentrations of wintering waterfowl and both are designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs). A nationally important population of the Annex I species Greenland White-fronted Goose (average 113 over 6 winters 1994/95 to 1999/00) is centred on Lough Conn. Whooper Swans also occur (numbers range between 25 to 50), along with nationally important populations of Tufted Duck 635, Goldeneye 189 and Coot 464. A range of other species occur on the lakes in regionally important concentrations, notably Wigeon 303, Teal 154, Mallard 225, Pochard 182, Lapwing >1,000 and Curlew 464. Golden Plover also frequent the lakes, with numbers ranging between 700 and 1,000.

Loughs Conn and Cullin are one of the few breeding sites for Common Scoter in Ireland. Breeding has occurred on Lough Conn since about the 1940s when about 20-30 pairs were known. A census in 1983 recorded 29 pairs. Breeding was first proved on Lough Cullin in 1983 when 24 pairs were recorded. In 1995, 24-26 pairs were recorded at Lough Conn and 5 pairs at Lough Cullin. The latest survey in 1999 gives a total of 30 birds for both lakes, comprising only 5 pairs, 18 unpaired males and 2 unpaired females. The reason for the decline is not known but may be due to predation by mink, possible changes in food supply and/or redistribution to other sites. The Common Scoter is a Red Listed species.

Agriculture, with particular emphasis on grazing, is the main land use along the Moy. Much of the grassland is unimproved but improved grassland and silage fields are also present. The spreading of slurry and fertiliser poses a threat to the water quality of this salmonid river and to the large lakes. Fishing is the main tourist attraction on the Moy and there are a large number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. The North Western Regional Fishery Board have erected fencing along selected stretches of the river as part of their salmonid enhancement programme. Other aspects of tourism are concentrated around Loughs Conn and Cullin.

Afforestation has occurred in the past around the shores of Loughs Conn and Cullin. The coniferous trees are due for harvesting shortly. It is proposed to replant with native tree species in this area. Forestry is also present along many of the tributaries and in particular along the headwaters of the Deel. Forestry poses a threat in that sedimentation and acidification can occur. Sedimentation can cover the gravel beds resulting in a loss of suitable spawning grounds. The Moy was arterially dredged in the 1960s. Water levels have been reduced since that time. This is particularly evident along the shores of Loughs Conn and Cullin and in the canal-like appearance of some river stretches. Ongoing maintenance dredging is carried out along stretches of the river system where the gradient is low. This is extremely destructive to salmonid habitat in the area.

The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and habitats listed on Annex I of this Directive, as well as examples of other important habitats. The presence of a fine example of broadleaved woodland in this part of the country increases the overall habitat diversity and adds to the ecological value of the site, as does the presence of the range of nationally rare and Red Data Book plant and animal species.

Appendix II

Conservation Objectives – River Moy cSAC

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

River Moy SAC 002298



An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta,
Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta

Department of Arts, Heritage,
Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

[https:// www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/
conservation_objectives/CO002298.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002298.pdf)