

**PROPOSED VARIATION No. 4  
OF  
WESTPORT TOWN & ENVIRONS  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
2010-2016**

**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 Westport Town and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016. The Westport Town and Environs Development Plan 2009–2015 was adopted in on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and took effect from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. 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 determine 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 Westport Town and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 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

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Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)<sup>1</sup>, Special Protection Areas (SPA), and proposed Special 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 Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016 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;

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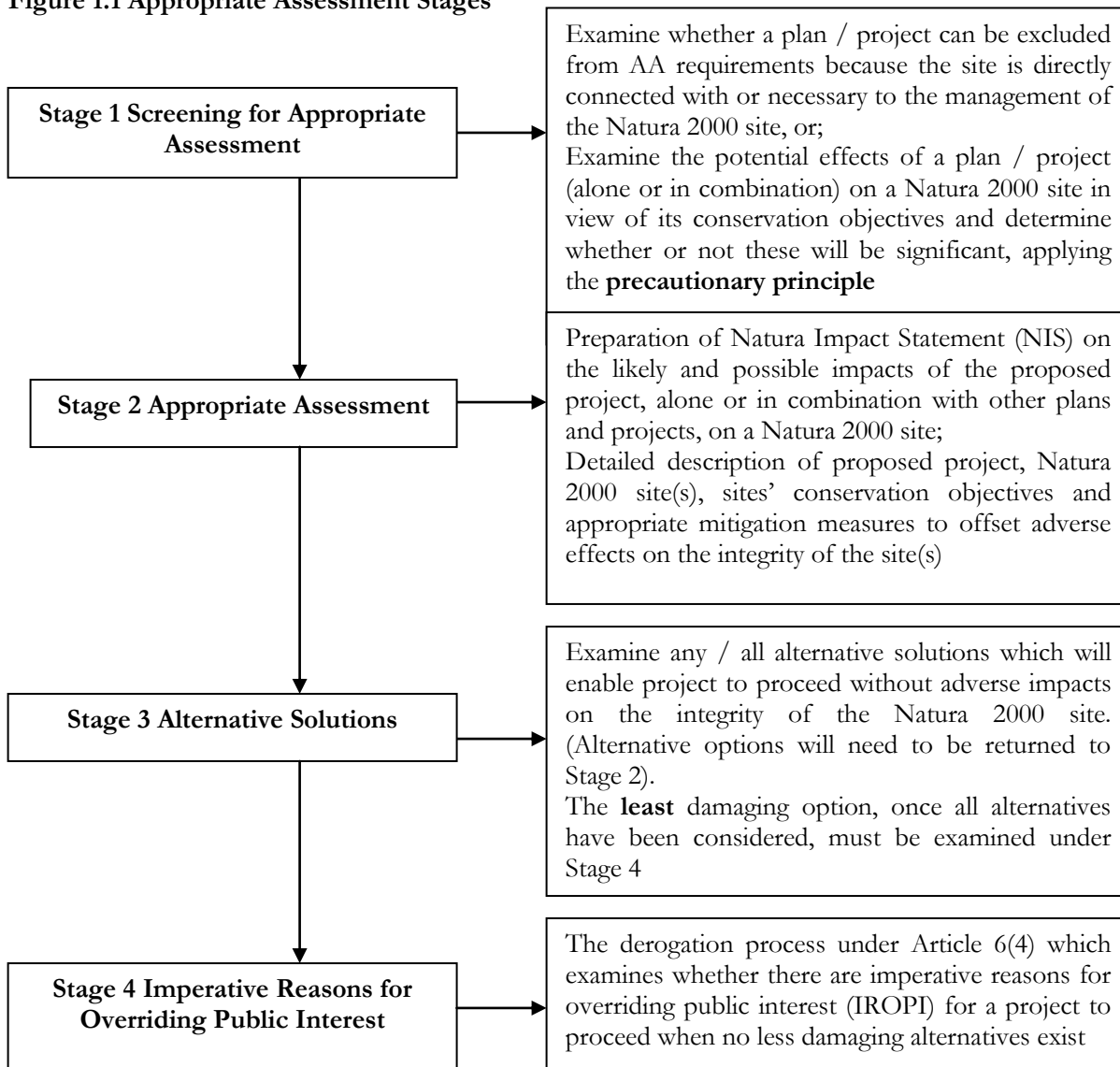
<sup>1</sup> It should be stated at this point that all SACs in Ireland are currently candidate SACs but this does not alter or influence the sites' full protection by law

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- *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.* European Commission, 2002;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter PD 2/07 and NPWS 1/07, 2007;
- 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 EIA 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 Westport & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 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 –  
(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 Westport & Environs Plan 2010-2016 (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.

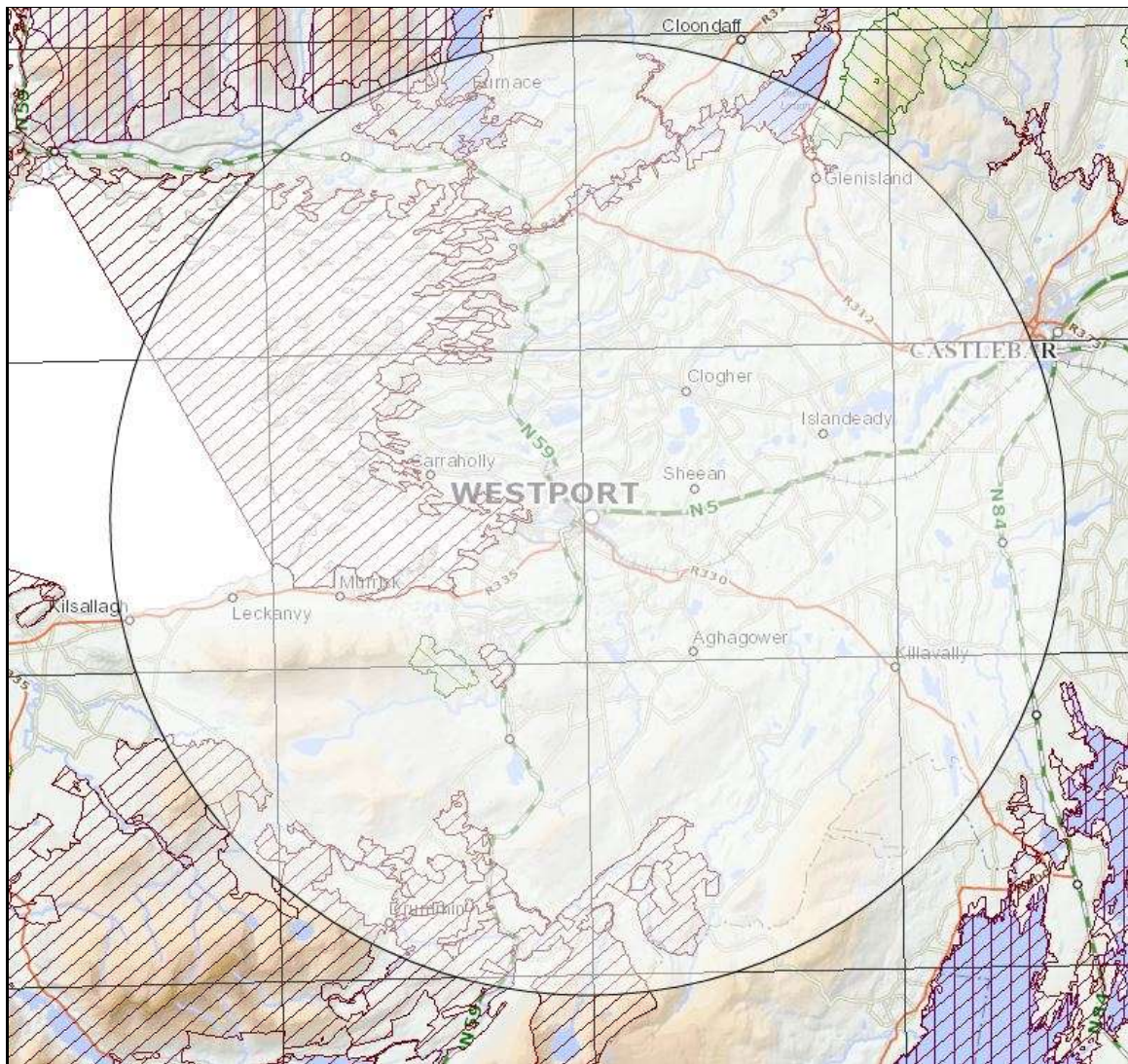
All elements of the Proposed Variation are examined to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Plan, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites.

### 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 judgement<sup>2</sup>, 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 Proposed Variation, 15 km buffer zone and identified Natura 2000 sites**



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<sup>2</sup> 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 five Natura 2000 sites within the proposed project 15 km buffer zone, five candidate Special Areas of Conservation and one 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 Westport Town and Environs Plan.**

Site code	Natura 2000 Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [ ], * denotes priority habitat)
002144	Newport River cSAC	[1029] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i>
000534 004098	Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC Owenduff/Nephin Complex SPA	[3110] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains ( <i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i> ) [3160] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3260] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [4010] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4060] Alpine and Boreal heaths [5130] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [7130] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7140] Transition mires and quaking bogs [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i> Salmon [1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> Otter [1393] <i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i> Slender Green Feather-moss [1528] <i>Saxifraga hirculus</i> Marsh Saxifrage  * denotes a priority habitat  [A098] <i>Falco columbarius</i> Merlin [A140] <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> Golden Plover

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001482	Clew Bay Complex SAC	<p>[1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>[1150] Coastal lagoons</p> <p>[1160] Large shallow inlets and bays</p> <p>[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>[1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks</p> <p>[1330] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>[2110] Embryonic shifting dunes</p> <p>[2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)</p> <p>[21A0] Machairs (* in Ireland)</p> <p>[91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p> <p>[1013] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail)</p> <p>[1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)</p> <p>[1365] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal)</p>
001932	Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC	<p>[1150] Coastal lagoons</p> <p>[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>[1330] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>[1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</p> <p>[2110] Embryonic shifting dunes</p> <p>[2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)</p> <p>[2150] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>)</p> <p>[2170] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>)</p> <p>[21A0] Machairs (* in Ireland)</p> <p>[3110] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)</p> <p>[3130] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i></p> <p>[3160] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds</p> <p>[3260] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p> <p>[4010] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></p> <p>European dry heaths [4030]</p> <p>[4060] Alpine and Boreal heaths</p> <p>[5130] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</p>



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		<p>[6430] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels</p> <p>[7130] Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</p> <p>[7140] Transition mires and quaking bogs</p> <p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</p> <p>[7220] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</p> <p>[7230] Alkaline fens</p> <p>[8110] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)</p> <p>[8210] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>[8220] Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>[1013] Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail)</p> <p>[1014] Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail)</p> <p>[1029] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel)</p> <p>[1106] Salmo salar (Salmon)</p> <p>[1355] Lutra lutra (Otter)</p> <p>[1395] Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort)</p> <p>[1833] Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad)</p>
000471	Brackloon Woods SAC	[91A0] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles

### **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.

With respect to conservation objectives of all the Natura 2000 sites above only one, Clew Bay Complex SAC has site-specific conservation objectives for the maintenance or restoration of qualifying interests or special conservation interests species at favourable conservation status the remaining Natura 2000 sites are associated with generic conservation objectives.

Essentially, the generic conservation objectives are to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interests and special conservation interests for which the sites have been selected.

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. <sup>3</sup>	Text Changes in the plan as adopted	Are Significant Effects on European sites envisaged? Y/N? Explain.
VW.T1	<p>Page 14/Westport Town &amp; Environs Development Plan (WTDP), The Core Strategy Add new paragraph at end:</p> <p>Future development in Westport 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 8 titled "Residential &amp; Regeneration Lands"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No.</b></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>
VW.T2	<p>Page 29/Westport Town &amp; Environs Development Plan (WTDP), Housing Objectives Add new objective HO-10 at end:</p> <p><b>HO-10</b> 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</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No.</b></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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<sup>3</sup> 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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	<p>may be applied include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Phase 1 Residential lands in Westport and</li> <li>2. Any other residential zoned lands on which there is planning permission in respect of which substantial works have not been carried out within 3 years of the date of permission.</li> </ol> <p>These areas are shown on map 8 titled "Residential and Regeneration Lands"</p>	
VW.T3	<p>Page 34/Westport Town &amp; Environs Development Plan (WTDP), Obsolescence / Derelict Sites Add new objective ODO-01 and renumber existing objectives.</p> <p><b>ODO-01</b> 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 Westport 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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land,</li> <li>(ii) urban blight and decay,</li> <li>(iii) anti-social behaviour, or</li> <li>(iv) a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses.</li> </ol> <p>In this regard, the following areas are identified for the purpose of renewal and regeneration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lands zoned as Town Centre</li> <li>2. Other lands immediately adjoining the Town Centre</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No.</b></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>zoning, the development of which would support renewal and regeneration.</p> <p>These areas are shown on map 8 titled "Residential and Regeneration Lands"</p> <p><b>ODO-02</b> It is an objective of the Council to implement the provisions of Derelict Sites legislation.</p> <p><b>ODO-03</b> It is an objective of the Council to encourage the re-use of existing obsolete/derelict buildings/sites and develop or to facilitate the development of the backlands and obsolete areas, where appropriate.</p>	
VB.M1	<p><b>Add new map showing Residential and Regeneration lands within which the vacant site levy may be applied in accordance with the Urban Housing &amp; Regeneration Act 2015.</b></p> <p><b>Add new Map 8 Residential &amp; Regeneration Lands</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>No.</b></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
002144	None envisaged	???	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
000534 004098	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
001482	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
001932	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
000471	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged

**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
002144	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
000534 004098	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
001482	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
001932	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged	None envisaged
000471	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 Newport River cSAC, Owenduff/Nephrin Complex SAC, Owenduff/Nephrin Complex SPA, Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC, or the Brackloon Woods SAC being affected by the proposed variation. This is due to the nature of the proposed amendments to the Westport 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 Clew Bay Complex SAC, due to its location adjoining the Plan area boundary.

Site-specific conservation objectives for the Clew Bay Complex SAC were published in July 2011. The following table illustrates the examination of site-specific conservation objectives for the qualifying interests of the Clew Bay Complex SAC 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 Clew Bay SAC**

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
1013 Geyer's whorl snail <i>Vertigo geyeri</i>	Not currently available	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of Clew Bay, which may indirectly adversely affect the conservation status of this species
1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly adversely affect the conservation status of this habitat
1150 * Coastal lagoons	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lagoons in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of Clew Bay which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
1160 Large shallow inlets and bays	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of the Clew Bay which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of driftlines in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
1330 Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i> )	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
[1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i>	To restore the favourable conservation condition of otter	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of Clew Bay or cause additional disturbance by human presence which may indirectly affect the conservation status of this

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		water-dependant species
1365 Common seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour seal in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or water quality of Clew Bay, which may indirectly adversely affect the conservation status of this species
2110 Embryonic shifting dunes	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat
2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> in Clew Bay Complex SAC	The proposed variation to the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016, due to the nature of the amendments is highly unlikely to affect the habitat or indirectly affect the conservation status of this habitat

It is not envisaged that the Annex I habitats for which the Clew bay Complex SAC is designated will be affected by the proposed amendments to the Westport Town and 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 Clew bay Complex SAC. It is not considered, by virtue of the nature of the amendments proposed to the Westport Town and Environs Plan that it is probable for the proposed variation to impact negatively on the integrity of the Clew bay Complex SAC 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 five 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 Clew bay Complex SAC 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 Clew bay Complex SAC, in view of the site's conservation objectives are not considered likely by virtue of the nature of the proposed amendments to the Westport 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 Clew bay Complex SAC to its location adjoining the Westport Town 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 Clew bay Complex SAC, occupying a large area of Clew Bay has been designated in consideration of three Annex II species and ten Annex I habitats.

As a consequence of the nature of the proposed amendments and the fact that no Annex I habitats/Annex II will be affected by the amendments it is not envisaged that there will be significant adverse effects on the integrity of the Clew Bay SAC, 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

<b>Name of project or plan</b>	Proposed Variation No. 4 of the Westport Town and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016
<b>Name and location of Natura 2000 sites</b>	Full list of Natura 2000 sites illustrated in Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2 and listed in Table 3.1
<b>Description of the project or plan</b>	The Land Use plan, in this case a variation of a development plan <sup>4</sup> 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.
<b>Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?</b>	No, the proposed variation is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site  The variation is a change to the wording of the plan to incorporate provisions of the Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015 regarding the vacant site levy and urban renewal & regeneration in to the plan.
<b>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site(s) (provide details)?</b>	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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.	The effects envisaged on the surrounding environment are not considered to impact significantly 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 Clew Bay SAC, but it is not envisaged that the proposed variation of the Westport Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016 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 Clew Bay 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.**

## References

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- NPWS, 2008. *The Status of EU-protected Habitats and Species in Ireland; Conservation Status in Ireland of Habitats and Species listed in the European Council Directive on the Conservation of Habitats, Flora and Fauna 92/43/EEC*
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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 – Clew Bay SAC**

**Site Name: Clew Bay Complex SAC**

**Site Code: 001482**

Clew Bay is a wide, west-facing bay on the west coast of Co. Mayo. It is open to the westerly swells and winds from the Atlantic, with Clare Island giving only a small amount of protection. This drumlin landscape was formed during the last glacial period when sediments were laid down and smoothed over by advancing ice. The sea has subsequently inundated the area, creating a multitude of islands. The geomorphology of the bay has resulted in a complex series of interlocking bays creating a wide variety of marine and terrestrial habitats.

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):

- [1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats
- [1150] Coastal Lagoons\*
- [1160] Large Shallow Inlets and Bays
- [1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines
- [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks
- [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
- [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes
- [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)
- [21A0] Machairs (\* in Ireland)
- [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands
  
- [1013] Geyer's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo geyeri*)
- [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
- [1365] Common (Harbour) Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

Within the shallow bay, subtidal sediments are characterised by typical bivalve communities in fine sand (*Chamelea striatula* and *Ensis* sp.), and by the polychaete worm *Euclymene* sp. and the bivalve *Thyasira flexuosa* in muddy sand. The intertidal sediment communities are characterised by polychaetes and bivalves in the mid shore and by the sand mason worm *Lanice conchilega* in the low shore. In areas where there is maerl debris with small amounts of live maerl, the infaunal community has a mixture of species characteristic of coarse sand (e.g. the bivalves *Timoclea ovata*, *Spisula* sp., and the polychaetes *Nephtys cirrosa* and *Glycera lapidum*) and medium sand (e.g., the bivalve *Ensis* sp. and the polychaetes *Lanice conchilega*, *Scoloplos armiger* and *Sthenelais boa*). The bivalves *Timoclea ovata*, *Tapes rhomboides* and the polychaetes

*Branchiomma bombyx* and *Glycera lapidum* are typical of gravels and medium sands, whereas the bivalves *Abra alba*, *Corbula gibba*, *Thyasira flexuosa* and *Mysella bidentata* and the polychaete *Euclymene* are characteristic of muddy sands. Beds of live maerl of *Lithothamnion corallioides* are also present in a number of areas.

Around the edges of the inner part of the bay are shores of mixed boulders, cobbles, gravel with some sand and mud. They have a typical zonation of intertidal communities found on sheltered shores of mixed substratum. The shore at Murisk is unusual as a distinct zone characterised by archiannelids occurs above the sandhopper zone in the upper shore under the boulders and cobbles. This is an unusual habitat. In sheltered areas of shallow water with little sand scour a well-developed community of hydroids, sponges and solitary sea squirts is present. Where the sediments include gravel and mud the species richness in the area can be exceptionally high (180 species). A number of marine species that are rarely recorded are found in Clew Bay: the stalked jellyfish *Lucernariopsis cruxmelitensis*; the polychaetes *Anitides rosea*, *Clymenura clypeata*, *Pterosyllis formosa* and *Pionosyllis* sp. and the snail *Clypterea chinensis*.

Clew Bay is considered to have the most significant shingle reserves in the country, and has (on the islands) the only examples of incipient gravel barriers in Ireland. Associated with the shingle (and dunes) are good examples of annual vegetation of drift lines. Characteristic species found in these habitats include: Spear-leaved Orache (*Atriplex prostrata*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*) and Sea Campion (*Silene vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*).

Lough Furnace is located at the north-eastern corner of Clew Bay. The lough is a good example of a deep, stratified, saline lake lagoon in a very natural state. Salinity levels can vary considerably here depending on rainfall and tides. The lake is one of the very few permanently stratified lakes known in Ireland and Britain. The lake is ringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), with small patches of Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Lough Furnace supports a relatively high faunal diversity (41 taxa recorded in a 1996 survey), including a number of important invertebrate species. The relict mysid species *Neomysis integer*, the isopods *Jaera albifrons*, *J. ischiosetosa* and *J. nordmanni*, and two rare amphipods (*Lembos longipes* and *Leptocheirus pilosus*) have all been recorded from the lake. Both Irish species of tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima* and *R. cirrhosa*) occur in the lagoon. Eel, Flounder and Mullet also occur in the lake waters. Mallard nest around the lough, while Saint's Island contains nesting Black-headed Gull.

At the north-western end of Lough Furnace lie two associated lakes, Lough Napransky and Lough Navroony. A stream drains from the latter into the main lake. The area contains flush and quaking-mire vegetation, which is of interest as Irish Heath (*Erica erigena*) is found there, with bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera*

*rotundifolia*). Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*), a species listed in the Irish Red Data Book and the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, is also found in this area. Beyond the wet area there is a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) dominated woodland growing over abandoned fields. Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) are common, with occasional Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). The ground flora contains such species as Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) and Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*).

Keeloges Wood is a medium-sized woodland on the north-east corner of Clew Bay. The woodland lies in a sheltered location between several drumlins and occurs on a shallow, moist, brown-earth soil with an organic-rich A horizon which is occasionally peaty. The soil is gleyed near streams and flushes. The woodland is dominated by Sessile Oak, with Downy Birch and occasional Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Hazel, Holly and Hawthorn are the principal components of the shrub layer. In moister sites Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) occur. The woodland is at the more fertile end of the spectrum of oak woodlands and is transitional to Ash woodland. Consequently the field layer is species-rich. Elements of oak woodland, e.g. Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*), Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), are mixed with elements of Ash woodland, e.g. False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) and Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), as well as indicators of poorly-drained soil, e.g. Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*). The epiphyte *Lobaria pulmonaria* is also present, together with numerous other lichen and bryophyte species (including *Usnea* spp).

The wood was cut during the second World War so most of the trees are approximately 60 years old, but a few very much larger oaks occur, principally on the shoreline. There is a low but well-developed canopy with a well-developed shrub layer and often luxuriant field layer. There is good regeneration of trees. A most unusual feature is the juxtaposition of oak woodland with saltmarsh where the woodland borders the shoreline. The wood has been well-managed in recent times with occasional filling in of wind-blown coupes with trees derived from seed collected on-site. A stock-proof fence has been maintained along the land boundary. No invasive exotics were encountered during recent survey. The woodland appears on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map indicating that it is long-established and possibly ancient. The species-list also supports this contention with at least 14 species present here which have been found to be significantly more frequent in potentially ancient woodlands. This woodland is of particular significance in view of its location in the extreme north-west of the country where there is very little woodland, its position on the coast, its species-richness, excellent structure and its possible ancient status.

The Rosmurrevagh area in the north of Clew Bay displays a high diversity of habitats, from seashore to dunes, machair and coastal grassland, as well as saltmarsh, bog and fen. The sandy beach on the seaward side grades into dunes of Marram

(*Ammophila arenaria*). Adjacent to this, the saltmarsh vegetation, which is approximately 5 m wide, comprises Thrift, Common Scurvygrass, Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) and 'turf fucoids' (diminutive forms of brown algae). These plant species are typical of Atlantic salt meadows. Similar saltmarshes occur scattered around the entire shoreline of the bay.

Next to the saltmarsh at Rosmurrevagh is an area of coastal grassland and machair. The majority of the machair grassland is relatively level and occurs on a fine sand substrate that is free draining. Small patches of damp machair are often found in conjunction with the saltmarsh or low-lying depressions where water from incoming high tides occasionally reaches. Many typical grassland species such as *Festuca rubra* (Red fescue), *Bellis perennis* (Daisy), and *Plantago lanceolata* (Ribwort plantain) are found on the machair. Autumn lady's-tress (*Spiranthes spiralis*) and Field Gentian (*Gentianella campestris*) are occasional in the grassland sward. Flushes introduce a species-rich bog/fen type vegetation. Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Irish Heath, bog mosses, sedges, Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bog Asphodel and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) are also found.

A further dune system occurs at Bartraw in the south-west of the site. Here Marram and embryonic dunes occur along a shingle ridge which links a small island where dunes also occur. Embryonic dunes, characterised by the presence of Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*), also occur on some of the islands in the bay.

Important populations of Otter and Common (Harbour) Seal are found in Clew Bay. A total of 95 Common Seals were recorded ashore within Clew Bay Complex SAC in August 2003 during a national aerial survey for the species. Continued land-based monitoring within the site recorded 121 seals of all ages ashore in August 2009 and 118 in August 2010. The snail species *Vertigo geyeri*, which is also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been recorded from this site.

The Clew Bay Complex supports a good diversity of wintering waterfowl, with nationally important numbers of Red-breasted Merganser (average maximum of 70 in the winters 1995/96-1999/00) and Ringed Plover (average maximum of 142 in the winters 1995/96-1999/00). A population of Barnacle Goose (100-200 birds) frequents the islands during winter. Other species which occur in significant numbers include Great Northern Diver (14), Brent Goose (118), Shelduck (74), Wigeon (112), Teal (127), Mallard (64), Oystercatcher (250), Dunlin (450), Bar-tailed Godwit (73), Curlew (373), Redshank (172), Greenshank (10) and Turnstone (27) (all figures are average maxima for the winters 1995/95-1999/00). Species which breed in important numbers include Cormorant (115 pairs in 1985), Common Tern (20+ pairs in 2000/01), Arctic Tern (100+ pairs in 2000/01) and Little Tern (9 pairs in 2000). The various tern species, as well as Barnacle Goose, Great Northern Diver and Bar-tailed Godwit, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

The juxtaposition within Clew Bay of a wide variety of habitats, including 10 listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and the combination of important flora and fauna, including one Red Data Book plant and three animals listed on Annex II



of the E.U. Habitats Directive, make this a site of considerable national and international importance.

## **Appendix II**

### **Conservation Objectives – Clew Bay SAC**

# National Parks and Wildlife Service

## *Conservation Objectives*

Clew Bay Complex SAC 001482

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation\\_objectives/CO001482.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001482.pdf)



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