

STATEMENT OF SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

FOR

MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL (DRAFT) NOISE ACTION PLAN 2024-2028

In Line with the Requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive



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This report refers, within the limitations stated, to the condition of the site at the time of the report. No warranty is given as to the possibility of future changes in the condition of the site. The report as presented is based on the information sources as detailed in this report, and hence maybe subject to review in the future if more information is obtained or scientific understanding changes.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Article 6 of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) requires that all plans and projects be screened for potential significant effects upon Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The aim of this screening process is to establish whether or not significant effects upon those designated sites are likely to arise.

Traynor Environmental Ltd has been engaged by Monaghan County Council to undertake this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the Monaghan County Council (Draft) Noise Action Plan 2024-2028¹. This screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out in order to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites arising from the implementation of the Noise Action Plan are likely.

The Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 has been prepared by Monaghan County Council for major roads carrying more than three million vehicles per annum, which in County Monaghan comprises the national road - N2 and small sections of the N12 & N54, as well as Regional roads around the towns of Monaghan (R162 & R937), Castleblayney (R181, R183 & R938) and Carrickmacross (R927). This is the third Noise Action Plan devised for Co. Monaghan and it supersedes the 2018-2023 Noise Action Plan.

2.0 REGULATORY CONTEXT

2.1 Relevant Legislation – Nature Conservation

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) recognises that certain species of birds should be subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitats. The Directive requires that Member States take measures to classify the most suitable areas as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. SPAs are selected for bird species (listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive), that are regularly occurring populations of migratory bird species and the SPA areas are of international importance for these migratory birds.

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires that Member States designate and ensure that particular protection is given to sites (Special Areas of Conservation) which are made up of or support particular habitats and species listed in annexes to this Directive.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive also call for the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment for plans and projects not directly connected with or necessary to the management of, but which are likely to have a significant effect on any European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs).

Appropriate Assessment and the Habitats Directive

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the 'Habitats Directive' - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as *Natura 2000*. *Natura 2000* sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

¹ Monaghan County Council (2024) Draft Noise Action Plan 2024-2028. Relating to Major Roads within County Monaghan Carrying more than 3,000,000 Vehicle Passages Per Year.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"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) deals with the steps that should be taken when it is determined, as a result of appropriate assessment, that a plan/project will adversely affect a European site. Issues dealing with alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures need to be addressed in this case.

Article 6(4) states:

"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member States 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."

The Appropriate Assessment Process

The aim of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of a designated site's conservation objectives.

The 'Appropriate Assessment' itself is an assessment which must be carried out by the competent authority which confirms whether the plan or project in combination with other plans and projects will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European site.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority as set out in Section 177U(1) and (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as follows:

'(1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

(2) A competent authority shall carry out a screening for appropriate assessment under subsection (1) before—

(a) a Land use plan is made including, where appropriate, before a decision on appeal in relation to a draft strategic development zone is made, or

(b) consent for a proposed development is given.'

The competent authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment is not required if it can be excluded, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or project will have a significant effect on a European site.

Where the competent authority cannot exclude the potential for a significant effect on a European site, an Appropriate Assessment shall be deemed required.

Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Report (Natura Impact Statement (NIS)) should enable the competent authority to ascertain whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of the European site. If adverse impacts on the integrity of a European site cannot be avoided, then mitigation measures should be applied during the appropriate assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site remain. Under the terms of the Habitats Directive consent can only be granted for a project if, as a result of the appropriate assessment either (a) it is concluded that the integrity of any European sites will not be adversely affected, or (b) after mitigation, where adverse impacts cannot be excluded, there is shown to be an absence of alternative solutions, and there exists imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project should go ahead.

Section 177(V) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) outlines that the competent authority shall carry out the Appropriate Assessment, taking into account the Natura Impact Statement (amongst any other additional or supplemental information). A determination shall then be made by the competent authority in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site, prior to consent being given.

2.2 Relevant Legislation – Noise

The requirement of County Council's to prepare a Noise Action Plan (hereafter referred to as NAP) is set out for Member States under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC), a legal instrument for addressing adverse effects of environmental noise which have been transposed into Irish law² and require preparation of strategic noise mapping and implementation of NAPs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the national competent authority responsible for implementing the END and will ultimately report noise mapping and action planning to the European Commission.

² The END was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (S.I. 140/2006) (the "Regulations"). The Regulations were revised by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 549/2018) and amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 663/2021).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Appropriate Assessment

This Statement of Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared with reference to the following:

- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2021). Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- Draft Guidance Note for Noise Action Planning for the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018. Draft Version 2, January 2024;
- The AA has also been undertaken in consideration of the European Union (CJEU) judgment on Case C323/17 (People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta), which concluded that "*it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects [mitigation] of the plan or project on that site.*". Other caselaw relevant to Screening are Waddenzee (C127/02), Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála (C461/17) and Court of Appeal case C1/2009/0041/QBACF Citation No [2009] EWCA Civ. 1061.

The EC Guidance sets out a number of principles as to how to approach decision making during the process. The primary one is 'the precautionary principle' which requires that the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 should prevail where there is uncertainty.

When considering the precautionary principle, the emphasis for assessment should be on objectively demonstrating with supporting evidence that:

- There will be no significant effects on a Natura 2000 site;
- There will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site;
- There is an absence of alternatives to the project or plan that is likely to have an adverse effect to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site; and
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

This translates into a four-stage process to assess the impacts, on a designated site or species, of a policy or proposal.

The EC Guidance states that "each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required." Consequently, the Council may not need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the Appropriate Assessment.

The four-stage process is:

Stage 1: Screening – The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions – The process which examines alternative ways of achieving objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain – An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this screening statement has been structured as a stage-by-stage approach as follows:

- Description of the proposed plan;
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of that plan;
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the implementation of the plan.
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on-site integrity. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

3.2 Statement of Competency

This AA Screening report was carried out by Noreen McLoughlin, BA, MSc, MCIEEM. Noreen has an honours degree in Zoology and an MSc in Freshwater Ecology from Trinity College, Dublin and she has been a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management for over eighteen years. Noreen has over 20 years' experience as a professional ecologist in Ireland.

3.3 Desk Studies & Consultation

Information on the site and the area of the proposed development was studied prior to the completion of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Monaghan County Council – The (Draft) Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

3.4 Assessment Methodology

The proposed development was assessed to identify its potential ecological impacts and from this, the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed development was defined. Based on the potential impacts and their Zoi, the Natura 2000 sites potentially at risk from direct, indirect, or in-combination impacts were identified. The assessment considered all potential impact sources and pathways connecting the proposed development to Natura 2000 sites, in view of the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the site's Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs).

The conservation objectives relating to each Natura 2000 site and its QIs/SCIs are cited generally for SACs as "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected", and for SPAs "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA".

As defined in the Habitat's Directive, the favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future;
- The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:
- The population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Where site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for a European site, these include a series of specific attributes and targets against which effects on conservation condition, or integrity, can be measured. Where potential significant effects are identified, then these SSCO's should be considered in detail.

4.0 STAGE 1: SCREENING

4.1 Description of the Plan

Monaghan County Council (Draft) Noise Action Plan (2024-2028) has been prepared for major roads carrying more than three million vehicles per annum, which in County Monaghan comprises the national road - N2 and small sections of the N12 & N54, as well as Regional roads around the towns of Monaghan (R162 & R937), Castleblayney (R181, R183 & R938) and Carrickmacross (R927). This is the third Noise Action Plan devised for Co. Monaghan and it supersedes the 2018-2023 Noise Action Plan. The method of assessment of noise for this plan (Round 4 Noise Mapping) uses the common EU noise calculation methodology, CNOSSOS-EU 2015, which is different from the UK CRTN 1988 method used for previous Noise Action Plan.

The plan was prepared in accordance with the (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018, S.I. No. 549 of 2018 and the (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 663/2021). These Regulations give effect to the EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise (END Directive). The aim of the Directive and the Regulations is to provide for the implementation of an EC common approach to avoid, prevent, or reduce on a prioritized basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise. Adverse health effects of noise from road traffic can cause High Annoyance (HA), High Sleep Disturbance (HSD) and Ischaemic Heart Disease (IHD).

Environmental noise can be defined as unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities, including noise emitted by means of transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in agglomerations over a specified size. Types of noise not included in these Regulations are noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, noise created by neighbours, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.

Noise Mapping Bodies and Action Planning Authorities were assigned responsibility under the Regulations to draw up noise maps and prepare action plans for noise from the following sources:

- Major railways with more than 30,000 trains per annum (not applicable to Monaghan)
- Major airports with more than 50,000 flights per annum (not applicable to Monaghan)
- Major Roads with more than 3 million vehicles per annum (applicable to the N2, and part of the N12 & N54 and the R162 & R937 in Monahan town, the R181, R183 & R938 in Castleblayney and the R927 in Carrickmacross).
- Agglomerations of greater than 100,000 habitants (not applicable to Monaghan)

In 2021 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), as the designated Noise Mapping Body for major national roads, prepared noise maps and population exposure assessments for national roads. Monaghan County Council, as the designated Noise Mapping Body for major non-national roads, engaged in a centralised approach with a number of other Local Authorities to commission TII to prepare noise maps and population exposure assessments for major non-national roads carrying more than 3 million vehicles per annum. In this assessment TII mapped the N2 and parts of the N12 and N54 along with roads in the towns of Monaghan, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross.

Noise maps for County Monaghan are presented in terms of two noise indicators: L_{den} and L_{night} . L_{den} is the day-evening-night noise indicator and it represents the noise indicator for overall annoyance. It is based on day (07:00-19:00), evening (19:00-23:00) and night (23:00-07:00) time periods and it is weighted to account for extra annoyance in the evening and night periods. L_{night} is the night time noise indicator and is used in the assessment of sleep disturbance. It is based on night (23:00- 07:00) time period. Both of these indicators are based on year long averages of the day, evening and night time periods and each are plotted separately for the required roads in the County.

The results of the strategic noise mapping provide information on the predicted noise levels at all noise sensitive properties within the assessment area, along with an estimate of the number of inhabitants. This data is then used to identify **Important Areas (IAs)**, as required under the Regulations, where long term noise exposure to noise from infrastructure is likely to produce negative health effects on the exposed population. **Important Areas (IAs)** are all areas exposed above the outdoor noise levels of $L_{den} = 53\text{dBA}$ and $L_{night} = 45\text{dBA}$.

For each Important Area i.e. noise sensitive location that comes within the $L_{den} 53\text{dBA}$ limit value and/or $L_{night} 45\text{dBA}$ limit value, the population exposure at that noise sensitive location was assessed and the harmful effects. This data was then used to determine **Most Important Areas (MIAs)**, which are a sub-set of Important Areas where the health effects are highest, typically through a product of noise exposure level and the number of people highly annoyed at geographically specific locations. This is done using the criterion of number of people Highly Annoyed per 100m². Guide density criteria of 15 or more people per 100m² was used to determine Most Important Areas in main urban areas, with lower criteria of 10 and 7.5 people per 100m² appropriate on the edge of urban or in rural areas.

The approach to identifying Most Important Areas is of a statistical nature and pertains to the entire population encompassed by the noise maps. It should not be construed as a precise assessment of harmful effects for specific buildings, nor are the extents of the Most Important Areas definitive. Instead, they are indicative in identifying areas with a relatively high number of people who may be potentially highly annoyed due to noise.

The MIA calculation process identified 18 MIAs along major routes in County Monaghan. Seven of the MIA locations overlapped at various threshold levels, therefore a total of eleven MIA locations were available for consideration. The next stage in the process prioritised this list to 5-10 Priority Important Area (PIA). Monaghan County Council selected five PIAs from the information provided and give a commitment to undertake an assessment of noise mitigation measures for these areas, within the life cycle of the NAP.

The five Priority Important Areas include:

- PIA1, PIA3 and PIA4 in Monaghan town.
- PIA2 in Castleross Retirement Village
- PIA5 in Emyvale Main Street (Combining three closely located MIA's)

It is accepted that the methodology used for selection of MIAs and PIAs may result in locations with similar or even higher noise exposure levels and lower levels of population density not being identified as MIAs. However, Monaghan County Council may consider examining locations along major routes and including them as PIAs under the lifetime of the NAP, in cases where complaints relating to road traffic noise emanated prior to the adoption of the NAP.

The purpose of the Noise Action Plan is to endeavour to manage the existing noise environment on the N2 and major roads within the towns of Monaghan, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross and protect the future noise environment within the action planning area. Management of the existing noise environment will be achieved by verifying noise in the PIAs and undertaking a cost-benefit analysis for noise mitigation, where required. Protection of the future noise environment will be achieved through the planning process such as land-use planning, development planning, sound insulation measures, traffic planning and control of environmental noise sources.

The Noise Action Plan covers a four-year period beginning in 2024 and will be reviewed every five years thereafter in 2028. The views of the public will be taken into account by conducting an 8- week public consultation process on the Draft Plan. The results of the public consultation will be taken into account when preparing this document. Other bodies including Transport Infrastructure Ireland, adjacent Local Authorities and other relevant organisations will be

consulted on the draft document. Guidance and advice was obtained from the designated national authority, the EPA, at all stages of the process.

The following key actions are proposed over the lifetime of the NAP;

- Conduct noise monitoring and validate noise model for all five PIAs
- Review potential mitigation measures for all PIAs and cost benefit analysis
- If applicable seek funding and approval to implement mitigation measures.
- All proposals for development/works under the Noise Action Plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of environmental and planning legislation and planning and licensing processes, including existing provisions of relevant land use plan(s) and policy documents such as the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial, the Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025.

4.2 Identification of Relevant Natura 2000 Sites

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a list of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the plan have been identified and described according to their site synopsis, qualifying interests, and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its Zone of Interest were also considered. The Zone of Interest may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors etc.

For significant effects to arise, there must be a potential impact facilitated by having a source, i.e., the proposed development and activities arising out of its construction or operation, a receptor, i.e., the European site and its qualifying interests and a subsequent pathway or connectivity between the source and receptor, e.g., a water course. The likelihood for significant effects on the European site will largely depend on the characteristics of the source (e.g., nature and scale of the construction works), the characteristics of the existing pathway and the characteristics of the receptor, e.g., the sensitivities of the Qualifying Interests (habitats or species) to changes in water quality.

There are 14 Natura 2000 designated sites either within County Monaghan or within 15km of the plan area, i.e., the Monaghan County Boundary. These designated areas and their closest points to the Monaghan County boundary are summarised in Table 1 and a map showing their locations relative to the application site is shown in Figure 1. A full description of these sites can be read on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (npws.ie).

The Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO's) of each site were also consulted to inform the assessment. Since the conservation objectives for the European Sites focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the QIs of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential effects of the plan against the QIs of each site. Sites in Northern Ireland were also included, although since Brexit these sites aren't covered under EU Legislation. [* = indicates a priority habitat]

Site Name & Code	Code	County	Distance	Qualifying Interests
Kilroosky Lough Cluster	SAC 001786	Monaghan	Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. [3140] • Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion <i>davallianae</i> [7210] • Alkaline fens [7230] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]
Slieve Beagh	SPA 004167	Monaghan	Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> [A082]
Magheraveely Marl Loughs	SAC UK0016621	Fermanagh	0km / at County Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. [3140] • Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion <i>davallianae</i> [7210]* • Alkaline fens [7230] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]
Upper Lough Erne	SPA UK9020071	Fermanagh	0km / at County Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> [A038]
Slieve Beagh-Mullaghfad-Lisnaskea	SPA UK9020302	Fermanagh / Tyrone	0km / at County Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> [A082]
Slieve Beagh	SAC UK0016622	Fermanagh / Tyrone	0km / at County Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160] • European dry heaths [4030] • Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]
Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs	SAC 000007	Cavan	0.9km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i>-type vegetation [3150] • Bog woodland [91D0] • Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> [1355]

Upper Lough Erne	SAC UK0016614	Fermanagh	1.29km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i>-type vegetation [3150] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]* Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]
Lough Oughter Complex	SPA 004049	Cavan	8.55km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Wetlands & Waterbirds [A999]
Dundalk Bay	SPA 004026	Louth	9km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] • Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] • Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] • Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] • Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Dundalk Bay	SAC 000455	Louth	10.3km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estuaries [1330] • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] • Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]
Stabannan-Braganstown	SPA 004091	Louth	11.3km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greylag Goose (<i>anser anser</i>) [A043]
Slieve Gullion SAC	UK 0030277	Armagh	11.6km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Dry Heaths [4030]
Moninea Bog SAC	UK 0030212	Fermanagh	12.7km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Raised Bogs* [7110]

Table 1 – Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km / Zone of Influence of the Plan

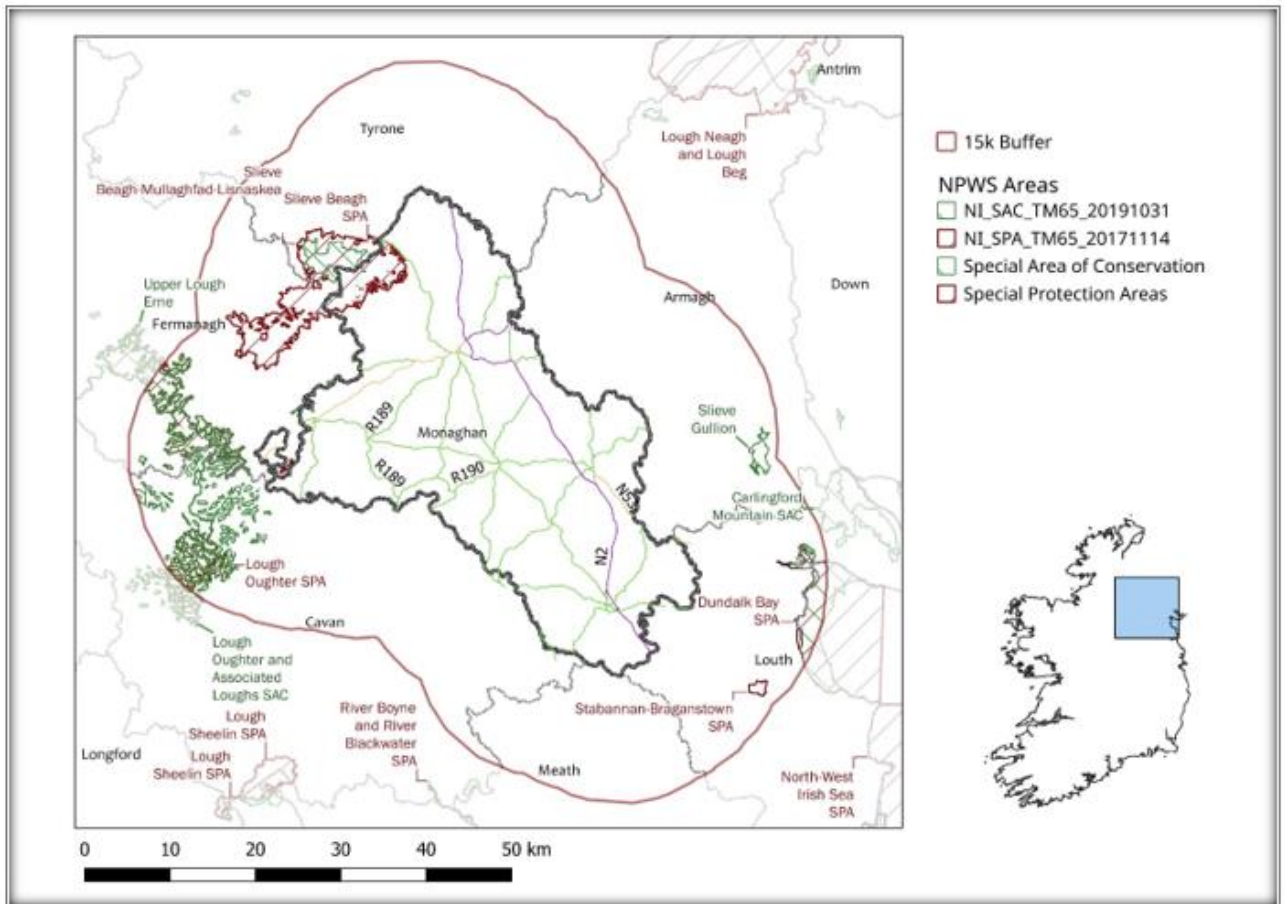


Figure 1 – The Application Site (Pinned) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km. Monaghan Road Network Included.

4.3 AA Screening Matrix

The AA Screening Matrix (based on the Guidance in "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" is presented below in Table 2.

Brief Description of the Plan
<p>Monaghan County Council (Draft) Noise Action Plan (2024-2028) has been prepared for major roads carrying more than three million vehicles per annum, which in County Monaghan comprises the national road - N2 and small sections of the N12 & N54, as well as regional roads around the towns of Monaghan (R162 & R937), Castleblayney (R181, R183 & R938) and Carrickmacross (R927).</p>
Identification of Natura 2000 Sites
<p>Natura 2000 sites within County Monaghan and within 15km / Zone of Influence of the County were considered in Table 1 and Section 4.2. There are 14 Natura 2000 sites within the plan area.</p>
Is the plan directly connected with, or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site(s)?
<p>The Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management objectives of the above listed Natura 2000 sites in Section 4.2.</p>
Describe the individual elements of the NAP (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the European Sites.
<p>Noise can be a principal source of disturbance for species listed as QIs of SACs and SPAs. The purpose of the NAP is to provide a strategic long-term management of environmental noise from traffic on major routes within the County, particularly where the noise exposure levels have the potential to induce harmful effects on human health. This will require reduction of existing environmental traffic noise where practical and also protection of the future noise climate in areas not currently impacted by traffic noise. The NAP does not propose any measures which could increase or negatively affect existing noise levels within Natura 2000 sites. As a consequence of the measures included in the NAP, any reduction in noise in areas near to, or within Natura 2000 sites will ultimately contribute to a beneficial effect in these sites and their QI features. The potential noise impacts that arise from future development works will be assessed in their own right through Planning and Licensing processes, including through Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, Appropriate Assessments, and application of relevant Guidance relating to noise.</p>

Describe any likely direct, indirect, or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the nearby Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:

Size and scale: The NAP will have no significant effects upon Natura 2000 sites by virtue of its size and scale. No Significant Effects Likely.

Land-take: There will be no land-take from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site: There are 14 Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence / 15km of the plan boundary. No Significant Effects Likely.

Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.): There will be no resource requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

Excavation requirements: There will be no excavation requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

Transportation requirements: There will be no excavation requirements from any Natura 2000 site. No Significant Effects Likely.

Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc: The Plan pertains to the period covering 2024-2028. No Significant Effects Likely.

Describe any likely changes to the nearby Natura 2000 sites arising as a result of:

Reduction of habitat area: There will be no reduction of habitat area in any Natura 2000 site.

Disturbance to key species: There will be no disturbance to key species in any Natura 2000 site.

Habitat or species fragmentation: There will be no habitat or species fragmentation in any Natura 2000 site.

Reduction in species density: There will be no reduction in species density in any Natura 2000 site.

Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.): There will be no changes in key indicators of conservation value in any Natura 2000 site.

Describe any likely impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:

Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site: It is not considered likely that there will be any significant impacts on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

Loss - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat: None

Fragmentation: None

Disruption & disturbance: None

Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.): None

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the project of plan being assessed could affect the site?
(In-Combination Impacts/Effects)**

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combinations with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon European Sites. The following plans have been considered:

- Ireland 2040 - Our Plan, the National Planning Framework
- Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (Replacing Regional Planning Guidelines; will commence in 2019 and will be adopted over lifetime of the Plan)
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region
- Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Community Plan 'Fermanagh and Omagh 2030'

The County Monaghan NAP when considered on its own will have no significant effects upon the Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan boundary and therefore, the potential for in-combination effects to arise when the NAP plan is considered with the implementation of the plans cited above, or other plans / projects is low.

5.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

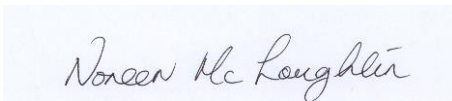
In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the County Monaghan Noise Action Plan in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km / Zone of Influence of the County.

At this stage of the AA process, it is for the competent authority, i.e., Monaghan County Council, to carry out the screening for AA and to reach one of the following determinations:

a) AA of the plan is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites;

b) AA of the plan is *not* required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites.

It is of the opinion of the author that an AA of the plan is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information provided in this report, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites.



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