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**2024
AA Screening Report – Greenway
Associated Works, 850m Long 2m Wide
Footpath & Car Park, Site 3, Poles
Cross, Co. Meath.**

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Greenway Associated Works, 850m Long 2m Wide Footpath & Car Park, Site 3, Poles Cross, Co. Meath

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1 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 impacts upon Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The aim of this screening process is to establish whether a full Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary.

A comprehensive assessment of the potential significant effects of the proposed works for the Boyne Valley Lakelands County Greenway project at Poles Cross, Lisnagrow, County Meath was carried out in March 2024 by Larry Manning, BSc (hons), of ORS Building Consultants. The proposed associated works include:

1. Construction of a new 850m long, 2m wide footpath to the west and east of the Poles Cross Greenway crossing point along the R162 road.
2. Provision of a 19 no. space car park immediately east of the Poles Cross Greenway access point, on the northern side of the R162 road.

This report will allow the relevant competent authority to undertake an Appropriate Assessment as required under the Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.

The location of the proposed development is within 15km of sites designated under European Law. As such and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) regarding Appropriate Assessment, this screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites are likely. This exercise will also determine the appropriateness of the proposed project, in the context of the conservation status of the designated sites:

1.2 Regulatory Context

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). This is explained in greater detail in the following section.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD

was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2027 and that status does not deteriorate in any waters.

1.3 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).

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.”

1.4 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 AA Screening Methodology

2.1 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.
- westmeathcoco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer

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 project.
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed development.
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the project.
- 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.
- Description of proven mitigation measures.

2.2 Statement of Competency

This AA Screening report was carried out by Larry Manning BSc (Hons). Larry has an honours degree in Applied Freshwater and Biology from GMIT (ATU) Galway, where he gained an education in ecology and environmental management. Larry has worked on a wide variety of ecological assessments and habitat/species management surveys, including working as a consultant MMO for the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group Consulting, taking a lead role in marine engineering projects and overseeing regulatory compliance. He has extensive experience in the field of fisheries monitoring and research both in North Atlantic waters and in Antarctic waters for CAMMLR representing the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands government. The author has worked as a fisheries scientist for the Marine Institute since 2017 on research projects, species management plans, and fisheries species-specific population analysis. While working in the Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Service at the Marine Institute, Larry engaged with the fishing fleet directly while data gathering at sea on trawlers and played a vital role in gathering sensitive data pertaining to national catch quotas and landings obligations relevant to current regulations. Larry also has experience in implementing company strategy for offshore hydrographic and geophysical surveys in line with current legislation for Offshore windfarm development. During seismic surveys the author was employed as an offshore fisheries liaison officer which required in depth knowledge of regulatory frameworks to ensure the fishing fleet, the survey company, and the ships officers of the watch were all compliant and safe during highly complex and dynamic operations. The author also works as an ornithologist and provides habitat and species assessments for terrestrial infrastructure developments.

2.3 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 - Aerial photographs and maps of designated sites, information on habitats and species within these sites and information on protected plant or animal species, conservation objectives, site synopses and standard data forms for relevant designated sites.
- NPWS Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities, 10 December 2009 (as revised 11 February 2010).
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (2001)
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive (2018).
- NPWS (2013). The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland.
- Overview Volume 1. Unpublished Report, National Parks & Wildlife Services.
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water quality, geology and licensed facilities within the area.
- Myplan.ie – Mapped based information.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area.
- National Planning Application Database.
- Bing maps & Google Street View – High quality aerials and street images.
- Meath County Council – Plans and information pertaining to the development.
- Meath County Council - Information on planning history in the area for the assessment of cumulative impacts.

2.4 Assessment Methodology

The proposed development was assessed to identify its potential ecological impacts and from this, the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the proposed development was defined. Based on the potential impacts and their Zol, 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.

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- 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 should be considered in detail.

3 Description of the Proposed Development

3.1 Project Description

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared in support of a Part 8 Application for the proposed construction of a new 850m long, 2m wide footpath and a 19 no. space car park located along the R162 regional road at Poles Cross, in support of the Boyne Valley Lakelands County Greenway, which itself forms a strategic part of transport infrastructure, namely Ireland's National Greenway Strategy. The proposed footpath is to be constructed along a stretch of the R162 immediately west and east of the Greenway crossing point. The proposed car park is to be constructed immediately east of the Greenway crossing point, along the northern side of the R162 road. The purpose of this exercise is to determine if a full Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required for the consideration of the proposed footpath and car park aspects of the development located at Poles Cross.

The surface water drainage for the footpath is likely to comprise of small soak-aways in the adjacent grass verge.

The surface water drainage for the car park is likely to comprise a permeable surface and swale in the south-eastern corner of the car park which will allow percolation of water through the car park surface.

Much of the land on either side of the section of road for the proposed works are agricultural with some trees, hedges and improved grasslands and crop fields. There are a small number of private residences along the stretch of road at the location of the proposed works. The proposed works run through what is recorded as the townland of Lisnagrow is in the Electoral Division of Carrickleck, in Civil Parish of Enniskeen, in the Barony of Lower Kells, in the County of Meath. The Northeast side of the proposed works is where a large facility is located known as Gypsum Industries Ireland Limited. The area is industrialised and largely bare surfaced with synthetic surfaces. On the Southern edge of the proposed works is the Crystal Maze Adventure Sports Centre. The tree lines, hedges and woodlands and some of the fields have the potential for significant ecological value but they are not part of the Natura 2000 Network. The proposed works are located ca. 900m northwest of the privately owned Newcastle Lough Statutory Nature Reserve (SNR). The SNR does not form part of the Natura 2000 Network.

Meath County Council have requested an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, which focuses on the environmental sensitivity of the receiving environment; and an AA Screening report which focuses on any potential impacts posed by the works to designated areas (National Heritage Areas or Special Area's of Conservation).

The following works have been considered in the preparation of this AA screening report:

- Run-off and emissions from the road into the nearby streams and rivers during and post construction phase.
- Construction of the 19no. space car park and 850m long, 2m wide footpath.

A map of the proposed works is presented in **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1: Aerial photography taken from EPA MAPS, works location based on planning drawings provided by Meath County Council.



3.2 Site Location and Surrounding Environment

3.2.1 Location of Proposed Works

The works will be contained within the section of road outlined in **Figure 3.1**. The road is made of asphalt. The road itself is of little ecological value. The R162 road is surrounded by agricultural land. The road is located at Poles Cross, County Meath.

The Works are located ca. 900m northwest of the Newcastle Lough Statutory Nature Reserve (SNR) which occurs outside the area of the proposed works and was given due consideration throughout the screening process.

3.2.2 Habitats within the Proposed Works Area

The proposed works will be confined to the road and no ecologically sensitive habitats are located within the area of the proposed works. The land-use in the area surrounding the site is largely agricultural where improved agricultural grassland is the dominant habitat locally. There are some crop fields too. Other habitats represented locally include scrub, woodlands, hedgerows and treelines. There are also several scattered rural residences and farm holdings in the lands

surrounding the road and the habitats associated with these areas include buildings and artificial surfaces and amenity grasslands and gardens.

There is one stream in the immediate vicinity of the proposed works. This stream is located *ca.* 220m south of the works and is hydrologically connected to the Newcastle Lough SNR *ca.* 900m southeast of the proposed development site. According to the NPWS Newcastle Lough is a Statutory Nature Reserve (SNR) as per S.I. No. 602/2018 - Nature Reserve (Newcastle Lough) Recognition Order 2018. Newcastle Lough is not a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protected Area (SPA) and does not form part of the Natura 2000 network,

3.3 Natura 2000 Sites Identified

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 proposed development 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 impact 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. The measurements used here are taken from the closest point along the proposed work area to the SAC / SPA.

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 is 1 Natura 2000 (SAC) designated site within 15km of the application site. There are 11 proposed NHA's. For this exercise the proposed NHA's are examined in the context of full NHA, meaning they are treated as if they have full designation. These designated areas and their closest points to the proposed development site are summarised in **Table 3.1** overleaf and a map showing their locations relative to the works is shown in **Figure 3.2**. A full description of the sites can be read on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie).

Table 3.1: Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of the Proposed Site

Site Name & Code	Distance	Qualifying Interests	Screened In / Out?
Breakey Loughs Proposed NHA (001558)	Located ca. 4.67km West from proposed works.	N/A	<p>Screened out. There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</p>
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (000006)	Located ca. 13.14km Southwest of the proposed works.	<p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p>	<p>Screened out. There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby</p>

			<p>stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</p>
<p>Mentrim Lough Proposed NHA (001587)</p>	<p>Located ca. 12.97km East of proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or runoff from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</p>
<p>Ardee Cutaway Bog Proposed NHA (001454)</p>	<p>Located ca. 13.9km East of proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no</p>

			<p><i>source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i></p>
<p>Corstown Loughs Proposed NHA (000552)</p>	<p>Located ca. 10.23km East of proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase.</i></p>

			<i>Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i>
Reaghstown Marsh Proposed NHA (001828) (2 sites)	Located ca. 10.87km East of proposed works.	N/A	Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i>
Ballyhoe Lough Proposed NHA (001594)	Located ca. 6.48km Northeast of proposed works	N/A	Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into</i>

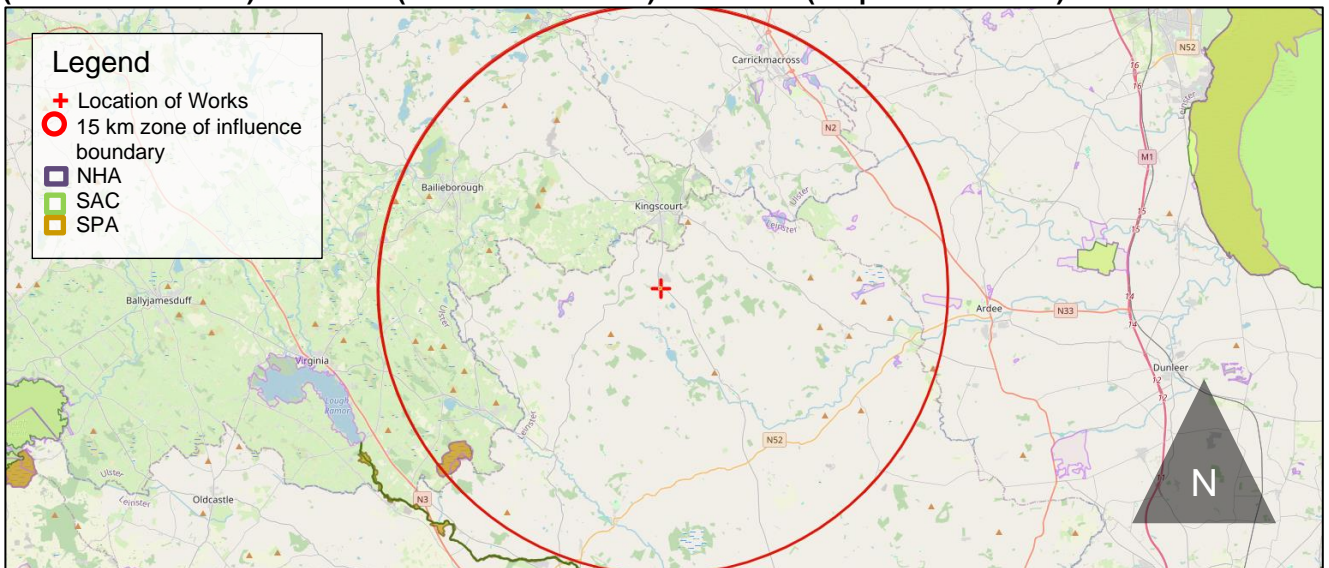
			<p><i>Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i></p>
<p>Monalty Lough Proposed NHA (001608)</p>	<p>Located ca. 13.44km Northeast of proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or runoff from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i></p>
<p>Spring And Corcrin Loughs Proposed NHA (001671)</p>	<p>Located ca. 14.11km Northeast of the proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor</i></p>

			<p><i>linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i></p>
<p>Lough Naglack Proposed NHA (000561)</p>	<p>Located ca. 12.38km Northeast of proposed works.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater</i></p>

			<i>Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i>
Lough Fea Demesne Proposed NHA (000560)	Located ca. 11.34km Northeast of proposed works.	N/A	Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</i>
Nafarty Fen Proposed NHA (002077)	Located ca. 13.69km Northeast of proposed works.	N/A	Screened out. <i>There are no watercourses within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works that connect to this any Natura 2000 sites, and there is no source- pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and any SAC's SPA's or NHA's with full or pending classification. The planning procedures outlined in the CEMP will mitigate any effluent or run-off from the construction phase into the nearby stream which feeds into Newcastle Lough. Any</i>

		<p>runoff from the road will be directed into current drainage systems. Additionally, the scale of the development is small, and will not affect the nearest SAC's, SPA's or NHA's over the long term or during the construction phase. Protected Groundwater Sources are not within the immediate vicinity of the proposed developments.</p>
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Figure 3.2: Location of Works (Centre) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites within 15km SAC - (Green Filled Areas) and SPA - (Brown Filled Areas) and NHA – (Purple Filled Areas).



3.4 Natura 2000 Impact Assessment

The potential significant effects of the proposed development on the European sites identified are described in **Table 3.2** overleaf.

Table 3.2: Natura 2000 Threshold Levels

<p>Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on nearby Natura 2000 site:</p>
<p>The proposed scheme at Poles Cross, County Meath will have no significant effects upon the European sites identified. There are no individual elements of the proposed project that are likely to give rise to negative impacts upon these designated sites. There will be no loss or fragmentation of any designated habitat. There are no pollution pathways between the works and the European sites, additionally, the small scale and nature of the works are unlikely to have significant effects upon these sites arising from emissions.</p> <p>The surface water drainage for the car park is likely to comprise a permeable surface and swale in the south-eastern corner of the adjacent grass verge, with some discharge into the existing ditch along the northern/western boundary of the car park.</p>
<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:</p>
<p>Size and scale: Having regards to the small size and scale of the scheme in relation to the overall size of the designated sites identified, the likelihood of any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on these designated sites arising from this scheme will be low.</p> <p>Land-take: There will be no land-take from any designated site. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site.</p> <p>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site: There are 12 European sites within 15km of the application site. The closest of these is the Breakey Loughs Proposed NHA (001558) located ca. 4.67km West from the proposed works, meaning that significant effects on European Sites and their Qualifying Interests can be ruled out.</p> <p>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.): No resources will be taken from any European site and there are no resource requirements that will impact upon any designated site.</p> <p>Emissions: There are no in stream works required as part of the works. There will be one watercourse crossings nearby and there is current drainage sufficient to accommodate the works. There will be no significant emissions into any water features arising from the works if correct procedures, good housekeeping, and CEMP guidelines followed are carried out. Significant effects upon European sites arising from emissions into water will not arise.</p> <p>Excavation requirements: There will be no excavation requirements that will lead to any significant effects upon the European sites identified.</p> <p>Transportation requirements: There will be no additional transportation requirements resulting from the proposed development and associated works that will have any impact upon the European sites identified.</p> <p>In-Combination / Cumulative Impacts: The proposed application was considered in combination with other developments or proposed developments in the general area and potential cumulative impacts were considered. A number of other developments have been granted planning permission in the general area in the last five years. The proposed development will have no cumulative impacts upon any designated sites when considered in combination with other developments that have been screened properly for AA (Stage I) or where AA has taken place (Stage II). Any future individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc: Works will be complete within 6-12 Months.</p>

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

Reduction of habitat area: The proposed development lies outside the boundaries of the European sites identified in Section 3.3. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC or SPA. There will be no impacts upon the habitat qualifying interests of any designated site. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any European site.

Disturbance to key species: There will be no disturbance to any key species protected under the EU Habitats Directive or EU Birds Directive.

Reduction in species density: There will be no habitat or species fragmentation within any European site. No ecological corridors between the proposed site and the European sites identified will be damaged or destroyed.

Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.): There will be no negative impacts upon surface or ground water quality within any European 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:

Significant effects are not likely to occur.

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 likely

Fragmentation: None likely

Disruption & disturbance: None likely

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

3.5 Finding of No Significant Effects

Table 3.3: Significant Effects Report Matrix

Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix	
Name and Description of project	<p>Name: "Greenway Carpark and Footpath Link – Poles Cross"</p> <p>Description: New 2m wide footpath, 850m in length, providing pedestrian access to the Boyne Valley Lakelands Greenway Crossing at Poles Cross. The footpath will extend from the Gypsum Plant, traverse the Greenway entrance, and continue to the Ballynaclose Junction.</p> <p>Provision of car park facilities to accommodate 19 car parking spaces, including two disabled parking spaces at the Poles Cross Greenway Crossing in the townlands of Lisnagrow and Ballynaclose.</p>
Name and location of Natura 2000 site	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Breakey Loughs Proposed NHA (001558) located ca. 4.67km West from proposed works. 2. Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (000006) located ca. 13.14km Southwest of the proposed works. 3. Mentrim Lough Proposed NHA (001587) located ca. 12.97km East of proposed works. 4. Ardee Cutaway Bog proposed NHA (001454) located ca. 13.9km East of proposed works. 5. Corstown Loughs proposed NHA (000552) located ca. 10.23km East of proposed works. 6. Reaghstown Marsh proposed NHA (001828) (2 sites combined) located ca. 10.87km East of proposed works. 7. Ballyhoe Lough proposed NHA (001594) located ca. 6.48km Northeast of proposed works. 8. Monalty Lough proposed NHA (001608) located ca. 13.44km Northeast of proposed works. 9. Spring And Corcrin Loughs proposed NHA (001671) located ca. 14.11km Northeast of the proposed works. 10. Lough Naglack proposed NHA (000561) located ca. 12.38km Northeast of proposed works. 11. Lough Fea Demesne proposed NHA (000560) located ca. 11.34km Northeast of proposed works. 12. Nafarty Fen proposed NHA (002077) located ca. 13.69km Northeast of proposed works.
Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?	No

The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site	Having regard to the location, nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects either from the proposed development on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	Not applicable as there is no potential for negative Effects.
Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive.	No significant effects are likely
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
Who carried out the assessment	Larry Manning BSC (Hons) Senior Ecologist
Sources of data	NPWS, EPA, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Meath County Council
Level of assessment completed	Stage1 Appropriate Assessment Screening
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed	Full results included

4 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 project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application site.

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

- (1)** AA of the proposed development 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;
- (2)** AA of the proposed development 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 proposed development 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. Therefore, this proposed project does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment Process, i.e., a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

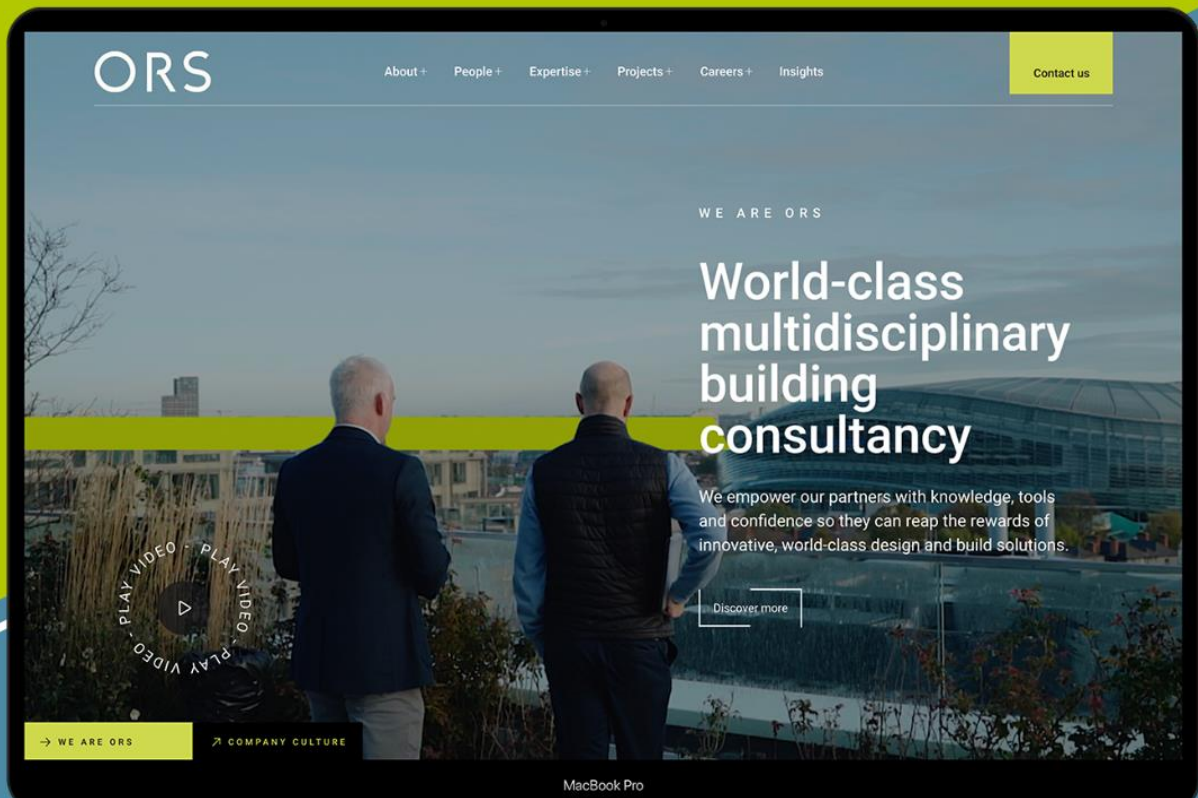
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