Inspector's Report ACP-323520-25

Development	Proposed development of N5 Knockavrony Bridge Rehabilitation Works
Location	Knockavrony, County Mayo
Local Authority	Mayo County Council
Type of Application	Application for approval made under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (local authority development requiring appropriate assessment)
Prescribed Bodies	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	29th January 2026
Inspector	Niall Haverty

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Mayo County Council ('the Local Authority') is seeking approval from An Coimisiún Pleanála ('the Commission') to undertake rehabilitation works at the Knockavrony Bridge which carries the N5 National Primary Road over the Strade River in the townlands of Knockavrony and Redhill, Co. Mayo.

1.2. The bridge is located 3.9km upstream of the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298). Further downstream (>30km) lie the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC and SPA (Site Codes: 000458 and 004036). Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (Site Code: 004228) lies c. 5.2km overland from the bridge. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and application under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), was lodged by the Local Authority on the basis of the proposed development's likely significant effect on a European site.

1.3. Section 177AE of the Act requires that where an Appropriate Assessment is required in respect of development by a local authority, the authority shall prepare an NIS and the development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved the development with or without modifications. Furthermore, Section 177V of the Act requires that the Appropriate Assessment shall include a determination by the Commission as to whether or not the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site and the Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out by the Commission before consent is given for the proposed development.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development is described as the rehabilitation of the existing Knockavrony Bridge on the N5 National Primary Road. The proposed works comprise:

- The installation of a 150mm thick concrete invert throughout the length of the corrugated pipe section of the structure to prevent further corrosion of the existing corrugated steel.
- Associated full dewatering of the river channel with an over pumping mechanism.

- Excavation of the north embankment over the reinforced concrete slab section of the structure to apply waterproofing to the concrete slab.
- Repair works to minor areas of spalling within the reinforced concrete slab section of the structure.
- Installation of fencing across the north elevation to increase the parapet containment height.

2.2. The application was accompanied by the following documents:

- Cover Letter.
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS).
- Planning Report.
- EIA Screening Report.
- Hydraulic Assessment Report.
- Stage 2 Structural Assessment Report.
- Resource & Waste Management Plan.
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- Plans and drawings.
- Notices and notifications to prescribed bodies.

3.0 Site and Location

3.1. Knockavrony Bridge carries the N5 National Primary Road over the Strade River in the townlands of Knockavrony and Redhill, c. 1.4km east of Ballavary, Co. Mayo.

3.2. The bridge comprises a single span corrugated steel pipe extended to the north by a reinforced concrete deck slab. The corrugated steel structure has a width of 25.2m and the concrete deck slab section has a width of 7.5m, giving an overall width of 32.7m along the centreline of the structure. The structure has a square span of 2.6m and a maximum skew span of 3.99m with a skew of 40 degrees.

3.3. The bridge structure carries a single carriageway measuring 10.15m wide with raised concrete rubbing strips located on both sides of the carriageway. There is a concrete

parapet along the north elevation and a vehicle safety barrier along the south elevation. The bridge is not a protected structure and is not included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

3.4. The lands surrounding the application site comprise agricultural lands both north and south of the existing bridge, with a number of one-off rural dwellings in the surrounding area, generally accessed from local roads.

4.0 Planning History

4.1. I am not aware of any recent relevant planning history.

5.0 Legislative and Policy Context

5.1. Relevant Legislative Provisions

5.1.1. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

5.1.2. This Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects which may have an effect on a European Site (SAC or SPA).

5.1.3. European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

5.1.4. These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in CJEU judgements. The Regulations in particular require in Reg 42(21) that where an appropriate assessment has already been carried out by a 'first' public authority for the same project (under a separate code of legislation) then a 'second' public authority considering that project for appropriate assessment under its own code of legislation is required to take account of the appropriate assessment of the first authority.

5.1.5. National Nature Conservation Designations

5.1.6. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are responsible for the designation of conservation sites throughout the country. The three main types of designation are Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and the latter two form part of the European Natura 2000 Network.

5.1.7. European sites located in proximity to the subject site include:

- River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298): c. 3.9km downstream (north) of the site.
- Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC and SPA (Site Codes: 000458 and 004036): > 30km downstream of the site.
- Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (Site Code: 004228): c. 5.2km north west of the site.

5.1.8. Nationally designated sites in proximity to the subject site include:

- Cunnagher More Bog NHA: 7.5km north west.
- Moy Valley pNHA: 7km downstream (north) of the site.
- Lough Conn and Lough Cullin pNHA: c. 5.2km north.

5.1.9. <u>Planning and Development Act 2000, as Amended</u>

5.1.10. Part XAB of the Act sets out the requirements for the Appropriate Assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.

- Section 177AE sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
- Section 177AE(1) requires a local authority to prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Natura impact statement in respect of the proposed development.
- Section 177AE(2) states that a proposed development in respect of which an appropriate assessment is required shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.
- Section 177AE(3) states that where a Natura impact assessment has been prepared pursuant to subsection (1), the local authority shall apply to the

Commission for approval and the provisions of Part XAB shall apply to the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.

- Section 177V(3) states that a competent authority shall give consent for a proposed development only after having determined that the proposed development shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- Section 177AE(6)(a) states that before making a decision in respect of a proposed development the Commission shall consider the NIS, any submissions or observations received and any other information relating to:
  - The likely effects on the environment.
  - The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
  - The likely significant effects on a European site.

5.2. Policy and Guidelines of Relevance

5.2.1. National Planning Framework (First Revision 2025)

5.2.2. National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 2 'Enhanced Regional Accessibility' seeks to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network including planning for future capacity enhancements.

5.2.3. Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012

5.2.4. The Guidelines emphasise the importance of protecting the capacity, efficiency, and safety of national roads through appropriate planning policies and collaboration between relevant authorities.

5.2.5. Construction, Replacement or Alteration of Bridges and Culverts, A Guide to Applying for Consent under Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945 (OPW, 2021)

5.2.6. Assists those applying for consent from the Commissioners of Public Works to construct, replace or alter a bridge or culvert.

5.2.7. Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (WAP)

5.2.8. The WAP focuses on protecting and restoring water quality by preventing and reducing pollution, by restoring the natural ecosystem functions of rivers, and by continuing to invest in water infrastructure.

5.2.9. Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011

5.2.10. The Guidelines recognise that there is a rich heritage of bridges throughout the country that requires careful consideration when any repair or alteration work is proposed.

5.2.11. Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028

5.2.12. Chapter 2 sets out the Core & Settlement Strategy for the County and contains a number of strategic aims, including "Strategic Road Network – To maintain the strategic function, capacity and safety of the national roads network, including planning for future capacity enhancements, and to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, are maintained to a high level to ensure quality levels of service, safety, accessibility and connectivity to transport users".

5.2.13. Policy MTP 7 aims "to support sustainable mobility, enhanced regional accessibility and connectivity within County Mayo in accordance with the National Strategic Outcomes of Project 2040 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region."

5.2.14. The following policies relating to national roads are contained in the Development Plan:

- **MTP 20:** To enhance regional accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions through the protection of the capacity, efficiency and safety of the national road network in County Mayo.
- **MTP 23:** To protect the capacity, efficiency and safety of the national road network in Mayo by complying with the 'Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for planning authorities' (2012).

5.2.15. In terms of the natural environment, Policy NEP1 seeks "to support the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage and biodiversity of County Mayo, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, that form part of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural

Heritage Areas Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves and Wild Fowl Sanctuaries (and other designated sites including any future designations)."

5.2.16. In addition, Policy NEO seeks "to ensure that the impact of development within or adjacent to national designated sites, Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves likely to result in significant adverse effects on the designated site is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment report (EcIA), Environmental Report (ER), an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), if deemed necessary, and/ or a Natura Impact Assessment (NIS), if deemed necessary, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, which should accompany planning applications."

5.2.17. Policy NH 5 seeks to "prevent development that would adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site located within and immediately adjacent to the county and promote favourable conservation status of habitats and protected species including those listed under the Birds Directive, the Wildlife Acts and the Habitats Directive."

5.2.18. The subject bridge is not a protected structure, is not located in any Architectural Conservation Area and is not included on the NIAH. However, Mayo County Council recognises the important contribution that all historic structures, features and landscapes, including those which are not listed in the RPS, makes to the county's heritage.

6.0 Consultations

6.1. Consultees Circulated

6.1.1. The application was circulated to the following bodies:

- An Taisce.
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.
- EirGrid.
- ESB Networks.

- Fáilte Ireland.
- National Ambulance Service.
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).
- Mayo County Council Planning Department.
- Mayo National Roads Design Office.
- National Monuments Service (NMS).
- Office of Public Works (OPW).
- The Heritage Council.
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).
- Uisce Éireann.

6.2. Responses Received from Consultees

6.2.1. The only response received was from **Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)**. It can be summarised as follows:

- The application has been progressed in accordance with TII standards and procedures and represents an essential bridge maintenance project on the strategic national road network.
- Proposed works give effect to NPF NSO 2 'Enhanced Regional Accessibility' to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network and the relevant provisions of the Mayo CDP.
- TII welcomes and confirms support for the proposed development.

6.3. Public Submissions

6.3.1. None.

6.4. Response of Applicant to Submissions

6.4.1. The applicant's response to the submission from TII can be summarised as follows:

- Mayo County Council welcomes the support of TII.

7.0 EIA Screening

7.1. The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination, (refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1). Furthermore, the proposal does not fall under any prescribed type of road development pursuant to Section 50 of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended) that requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

7.2. I note that the applicant has submitted an EIA Screening Report, which includes a Schedule 7 assessment. Notwithstanding this, I do not consider it is necessary to complete Form 3 given that the proposal is not a class of development for the purposes of EIA.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Introduction

8.1.1. The assessment will be undertaken in three parts as per the requirements of Section 177AE as follows:

- The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- The likely effects on the environment.
- The likely significant effects on a European site.

8.2. The Likely Consequences for the Proper Planning and Sustainable Development of the Area

8.2.1. Knockavrony Bridge is a relatively small-scale watercourse crossing that carries the N5 National Primary Road over the Strade River. The 'bridge' comprises a corrugated steel pipe culvert under the N5, through which the river flows, with an angled concrete slab bridge section crossing the river in a single span on the northern side of the road.

8.2.2. The need for the proposed rehabilitation works to the bridge is set out in Section 3 of the submitted Planning Report. A Stage 2 Structural Assessment of the bridge structure was undertaken by AtkinsRéalis, which identified corrosion to the corrugated steel pipe which forms the main part of the watercourse crossing. It also identified a need for additional works to repair and improve other parts of the structure to improve its current condition and long-term durability.

8.2.3. The proposed works will include: the installation of a 150mm thick concrete invert throughout the length of the corrugated pipe section to prevent further corrosion, including the temporary dewatering of the river channel with an over pumping mechanism during installation; excavation of the north embankment over the reinforced concrete slab to apply waterproofing to the slab; repair works to minor areas of spalling within the slab; and installation of fencing across the north elevation to increase the parapet containment height.

8.2.4. It is expected that the proposed works will take c. four weeks to complete, with relatively standard working hours and in-stream works permitted only between 1st of July and 30th September.

8.2.5. NPF NSO 2 'Enhanced Regional Accessibility' seeks to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network. Similarly, it is a strategic aim of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 "to maintain the strategic function, capacity and safety of the national roads network, including planning for future capacity enhancements, and to ensure that the existing extensive transport networks, are maintained to a high level to ensure quality levels of service, safety, accessibility and connectivity to transport users."

8.2.6. I also note the submission from TII which welcomes the proposed development, and which confirms that it has been progressed in accordance with TII standards and procedures and that it represents an essential bridge maintenance project on the strategic national road network.

8.2.7. Having regard to the information submitted, including the Stage 2 Structural Assessment, I am satisfied that the proposed works are necessary and justified to safeguard the continued structural integrity and condition of a river crossing on this National Primary Road. Subject to an assessment of the proposed development on the surrounding environment and European sites, I consider that the proposed

bridge rehabilitation works are acceptable in principle and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.3. The Likely Effects on the Environment

8.3.1. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, I consider that the main environmental effects to be assessed, other than those covered under the Appropriate Assessment, are as follows:

- Biodiversity.
- Hydrology and flood risk.
- Cultural heritage.
- Roads and traffic.

8.3.2. Biodiversity

8.3.3. The planning application is accompanied by an EIA Screening Report, a Natura Impact Statement and a Construction Environmental Management Plan. A Planning Report also accompanies the planning application, along with a Structural Assessment Report and a Hydraulic Assessment Report.

8.3.4. The Commission is advised that an Appropriate Assessment is carried out in Section 8.4, which considers if the proposed bridge rehabilitation works, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would adversely affect the integrity of any European site in view of each relevant site's Conservation Objectives.

8.3.5. A site survey was carried out by project ecologists in May 2025. No evidence was found of freshwater pearl mussel or white-clawed crayfish in the vicinity of the bridge structure. The riverbed at this location is generally poor given the presence of filamentous algae and is therefore unlikely to support these species.

8.3.6. Dipper was recorded in the vicinity of the culvert and a nest was recorded underneath the structure, although the species it belongs to is uncertain. No other breeding birds were identified and no evidence of other terrestrial fauna recorded. No evidence of any protected or invasive alien species, either aquatic or terrestrial, was found.

8.3.7. Potential impacts on biodiversity could occur from: spread of invasive species; disturbance of otter; increase in suspended solids and accidental spillages impacting on water quality; disturbance to other species.

8.3.8. Detailed mitigation measures are set out within the NIS and the CEMP, which include restrictions on the timing of in-stream works in accordance with IFI guidance; limiting access outside of works area; biosecurity protocols; and water quality protection measures including bunded storage for oils and fuels, silt fencing, measures for storage and stockpiling and on-site monitoring. The CEMP will be updated by the contractor and works will be monitored and overseen by an Ecological Clerk of Works and Environmental Manager to ensure that all mitigation measures are properly implemented.

8.3.9. Subject to compliance with the mitigation measures put forward within the CEMP and NIS, I am satisfied that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant effects on biodiversity.

8.3.10. Hydrology and Flood Risk

8.3.11. The site is within the Moy & Killala Bay WFD Catchment (No. 34) and the Moy_SC_070 Sub-Catchment. The watercourse over which the bridge crosses is part of the River Strade system [IE_WE_34S040800], and is identified as the Breandrum Stream, which flows in a northward direction and connects with the Little River to form the Strade River. The Strade River is a tributary of the River Moy, which ultimately enters the sea at Killala Bay.

8.3.12. The WFD Status of the Strade River is 'Good' for the 2019-2024 period and 'Not at Risk', while the River Moy is 'Moderate' for the same period. While the Strade River hasn't been sampled by the EPA since 1993 (when a Q value of 4 was recorded), I note that EPA sampling of the Little River in 2022 (c. 1.5 km east of the site) recorded a Q value of 4-5.

8.3.13. With regard to potential construction impacts, I note the detailed methodology outlined in the submitted documents, including the erection of three sandbag dams and silt fences to facilitate the creation of a dry working area, with overpumping via a pipe installed through the culvert at a high level. Provision is made for temporary working platforms and the methodology for demobilising the dams after the short construction phase is outlined. Potential impacts on water quality due to pollution

events or siltation are addressed within the CEMP and NIS and appropriate mitigation measures are outlined. Subject to implementation of the measures contained in the CEMP and NIS, I am satisfied that there will be no significant hydrological impacts during the works.

8.3.14. With regard to the impact of the works on hydrology in the operational phase, I note the Hydraulic Assessment Report, prepared by AtkinsRéalis, which was submitted with the application. The report assesses the implications of the culvert lining works on the flow capacity of the culvert and the impacts on flood levels upstream and downstream of the culvert.

8.3.15. The Report sets out the detailed hydraulic assessment for the bridge to evaluate flow behaviour under the design flood conditions (1% AEP with climate change allowance). With appropriate design of the inlet and the concrete invert, it found that the culvert would continue to operate under free-flow conditions for the design flow and that the hydraulic performance of the culvert would be improved. It is stated that the total head loss of 0.35m would be greater than the OPW requirement of 0.3m, but less than the existing head loss of 0.4m. This head loss is stated to be largely due to the change in direction of the watercourse, which could not be improved without significant watercourse realignment. The works would, however, improve conveyance at the inlet and reduce hydraulic loss through the structure, while maintaining the outlet velocity for the design flow at 3m/s as with the current structure.

8.3.16. During low flow conditions, the assessment found that there is sufficient depth of flow for fish passage through the structure, greater than IFI's recommended 150mm depth for fish passage. While velocity at the inlet would increase, it would remain below the velocity at the existing outlet, with no significant worsening of the fish passage situation.

8.3.17. I note that the Report includes a letter from the OPW granting consent under section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act 1945, as amended, for the proposed works.

8.3.18. Having reviewed the Hydraulic Assessment Report and the OPW section 50 consent, I am satisfied that there will be no material change to the carrying capacity or flow conditions in the watercourse crossing that could materially exacerbate flood risk elsewhere in the vicinity or significantly impede fish passage.

8.3.19. I am satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable from a hydrology and flood risk perspective.

8.3.20. Cultural Heritage

8.3.21. Knockavrony Bridge, which comprises a corrugated steel culvert and a reinforced concrete slab structure is not a protected structure, is not within an Architectural Conservation Area and is not included in the NIAH. Having reviewed relevant documentation and drawings, submitted photographs and having inspected the site, I am satisfied that it is not of any particular cultural heritage value or sensitivity.

8.3.22. Roads and Traffic

8.3.23. As noted above, a Structural Assessment Report found that the bridge structure is currently deteriorating due to steel corrosion and concrete spalling. The purpose of the proposed development is to rehabilitate the bridge structure to good condition and to ensure its function in carrying the N5 National Road over the river is protected into the future.

8.3.24. In order to undertake the works, an alternating single lane closure of the N5 is proposed for an estimated four week duration. Consequently, no traffic diversions will be required. The CEMP states that the appointed contractor will provide and implement a detailed Traffic Management Plan for the duration of works.

8.3.25. In my opinion, the proposed works are consistent with the strategic function of the National Primary Route. The proposed works will also prolong the life of the bridge and ensure the serviceability of the road infrastructure within the County. I also note that TII welcomes and confirms support for the proposed development, which gives effect to the National Planning Framework's NSO 2 'Enhanced Regional Accessibility' to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network.

8.4. The Likely Significant Effects on a European Site

8.4.1. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.
- Geographical scope and main characteristics.

- Screening the need for Appropriate Assessment.
- Natura Impact Statement.
- Appropriate Assessment

8.4.2. Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive

8.4.3. The Habitats Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) of this Directive requires that 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. The competent authority must be satisfied that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

8.4.4. I consider that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site and that it is therefore subject to the provisions of Article 6(3).

8.4.5. Geographical Scope and Main Characteristics

8.4.6. Knockavrony Bridge is located on the N5 in a rural area in the townlands of Knockavrony and Redhill, c. 1.4km east of the village of Ballavary, Co. Mayo. It comprises a corrugated steel pipe culvert under the N5, through which the Strade River flows, with an additional angled concrete slab bridge section crossing the river in a single span on the northern side of the N5 roadway. The corrugated steel structure has a width of 25.2m and the concrete slab section has a width of 7.5m, giving an overall width of 32.7m along the centreline of the structure.

8.4.7. The watercourse over which the bridge crosses is part of the River Strade system [IE_WE_34S040800], and is identified as the Breandrum Stream, which flows in a northward direction and connects with the Little River to form the Strade River. The Strade River is a tributary of the River Moy, which ultimately enters the sea at Killala Bay. The site is within the Moy & Killala Bay WFD Catchment (No. 34) and the Moy_SC_070 Sub-Catchment.

8.4.8. The WFD Status of the Strade River is 'Good' for the 2019-2024 period and 'Not at Risk', while the River Moy is 'Moderate' for the same period. While the Strade River

hasn't been sampled by the EPA since 1993 (when a Q value of 4 was recorded), I note that EPA sampling of the Little River in 2022 (c. 1.5 km east of the site) recorded a Q value of 4-5.

8.4.9. Consultation was held with Inland Fisheries Ireland, whose key requirement was that the works do not worsen conditions for fish passage.

8.4.10. A site visit was carried out on 7th May 2025, which included surveys for freshwater pearl mussel, crayfish and fish habitat. No evidence of freshwater pearl mussel or white-clawed crayfish was discovered in the vicinity of the bridge structure, and it was noted that the riverbed at this location is generally poor. No other aquatic species that are QI species for the River Moy SAC were recorded during the site visit. There was no incidental sightings or evidence of otter, other terrestrial fauna or invasive plant species. No flora species listed on the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022 ("the FPO"14) were recorded within the M29 10km grid square and no protected or rare flora species were identified during the survey.

8.4.11. The proposed works include: the installation of a 150mm thick concrete invert throughout the length of the corrugated pipe section; excavation of the north embankment over the reinforced concrete slab to apply waterproofing to the slab; repair works to minor areas of spalling within the slab; and installation of fencing across the north elevation.

8.4.12. A detailed description of the construction methodology is set out in Section 1.4 of the NIS. In particular, I note that the works will require the construction of a dry working area through the full dewatering of the channel. This will be achieved through the erection of 3 No. sandbag dams in the watercourse (Dam 1 upstream and Dams 2 and 3 downstream of the culvert). These dams will be built up in height sequentially by hand, with the section of river between Dams 1 and 2 electro-fished and all fish relocated downstream of the works area. Silt fences will also be erected to act as a final filter for sediment within potential surface water run-off before it re-enters the live watercourse. The works area will be pumped out and the flow in the stream will be overpumped by means of a pipe installed through the culvert at high level and discharged through a silt bag.

8.4.13. A working platform will be installed upstream and downstream of the culvert once the dewatered area is dried out, comprising geotextile placed over the existing riverbed

and a 250mm layer of washed, well graded clean aggregate placed on the geotextile. The aggregate will be placed using an excavator that does not have to enter the riverbed. On completion, the geotextile and aggregate will be removed and the riverbed reinstated.

8.4.14. The existing riverbed at the south upstream elevation will be excavated to a depth of 600mm below the finished bed levels to construct the new concrete apron at the inlet, with excavated material stored for reinstatement of the riverbed following the works. A small excavator may need to enter the works area via the temporary working platform within the dewatered area (i.e. no in-stream access required).

8.4.15. The existing steel culvert will be cleaned by pressure washing, treated with a corrosion inhibitor and primer, and the concrete reinforcement and shotcreting works to the culvert will take place by hand within the dewatered, dry working area. The concrete will be provided with a suitable roughened finish as per 'Design Guidance for Fish Passage on Small Barriers' (OPW, 2021).

8.4.16. Once the concrete has cured, the temporary working platform will be removed and any riverbed material reinstated. The localised concrete repairs to the concrete deck slab will also be undertaken by hand using a specialist high strength rapid repair mortar within the dry working area.

8.4.17. Following the completion of works to the concrete invert and deck slab repairs, the dewatered channel will be reinstated with the dams sequentially lowered and removed to allow for settling to occur and minimise any plumes of silt.

8.4.18. The waterproofing works to the concrete slab to the north of the structure will require excavation of the embankment and concreting works but can be achieved without any in-stream works or works over water. The embankment will then be reinstated.

8.4.19. The duration of the works is stated to be four weeks, and it is anticipated to commence in Q3 2026 at the earliest. In-stream works will be permitted only between 1st July and 30th September.

8.4.20. The nearest European site is the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298), which is located c. 3.9km downstream (north) of the site. The Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC and SPA (Site Codes: 000458 and 004036) are located more than 30km downstream of the site. Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (Site Code: 004228) is located c. 5.2km north west of the site.

8.4.21. Screening the Need for Appropriate Assessment

8.4.22. The first test of Article 6(3) is to establish if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects to a European site. This is considered Stage 1 of the Appropriate Assessment process, i.e. screening. The screening stage is intended to be a preliminary examination. If the possibility of significant effects cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information, without extensive investigation or the application of mitigation, a plan or project should be considered to have a likely significant effect and Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out.

8.4.23. Having regard to the information and submissions available, nature, size and location of the proposed development and its likely direct, indirect and cumulative effects, the source-pathway-receptor principle and sensitivities of the ecological receptors, the European Sites set out in Table 1 below are the only sites considered relevant to include for the purposes of initial screening for the requirement for Stage 2 appropriate assessment on the basis of likely significant effects:

Table 1: European Sites considered for Stage 1 Screening			
European site (SAC/SPA)	**Distance**	**Connections (source-pathway-receptor)**	**Considered further in screening (Y/N)**
River Moy SAC (Site Code 002298)	c. 3.9km downstream	Hydrological connection – the River Strade is a tributary of the River Moy	**Y**
Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (Site Code: 004228)	c. 5.2km north west over land	No hydrological connectivity and no pathway for impacts to the marine and freshwater bird species for which the SPA is designated.	**N**
Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC and SPA (Site Codes: 000458 and 004036)	>30km downstream	Weak hydrological connectivity but geographical distance is so large that there is no pathway for impacts, given the scale and nature of the proposed works.	**N**

8.4.24. Table 2 below provides a screening summary matrix for the River Moy SAC where there is a possibility of significant effects, or where the possibility of significant effects cannot be excluded without further detailed assessment.

8.4.25. Based on my examination of the NIS and supporting information, the NPWS website, aerial and satellite imagery, the scale and nature of the proposed development and likely effects, separation distance and functional relationship between the proposed works and the European sites, their conservation objectives and taken in conjunction with my assessment of the subject site and the surrounding area, I would conclude that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for the River Moy SAC.

8.4.26. The remaining 3 No. sites can be screened out from further consideration because of the limited scale and extent of the proposed works, the separation distances and the lack of a substantive linkage between the proposed works and the European sites. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on European Site Nos. 004228, 000458 or 004036 in view of the sites' conservation objectives and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required for those sites.

8.4.27. I am satisfied that no additional sites other than that assessed in the NIS (River Moy SAC) need to be brought forward for Appropriate Assessment. I confirm that no mitigation has been taken into account at the screening stage.

Table 2: Screening Summary Matrix – European Sites for which there is a possibility of significant effects (or where the possibility of significant effects cannot be excluded without further detailed assessment)			
Site Name:	**River Moy SAC (Site Code 002298)**		
Qualifying Interest feature	**Is there a possibility of significant effects in view of the conservation objectives of the site?** **General impact categories presented**		
	Habitat loss/ modification	**Water quality and water dependent habitats (pollution)**	**Disturbance/ displacement barrier effects**
Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Alkaline fens [7230] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	**Yes** Potential for invasive species to spread or be introduced to downstream habitats.	**Yes** Potential for release of contaminated surface water run-off and/ or accidental spillage or pollution event during construction.	**Yes** Temporary increase in noise/ vibration and human activity during construction could disturb/ displace fauna, e.g., Otter.

8.4.28. Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

8.4.29. The application was accompanied by a NIS, prepared by AtkinsRéalis, which describes the proposed development, the project site and the surrounding area. The NIS contained a Stage 1 Screening Assessment, which concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was required. The NIS outlined the methodology used for assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species within European Sites that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. It predicted the potential impacts for these sites and their conservation objectives, it suggested mitigation measures, assessed in-combination effects with other plans and projects, and it identified any residual effects on the European sites and their conservation objectives.

8.4.30. The NIS was informed by the following studies, surveys and consultations:

- A desk top study.
- An examination of aerial photography and maps
- A survey of the proposal site and surroundings
- Consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland (no response received from NPWS).

8.4.31. The report concluded, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that subject to the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures, the proposed development would not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts which would constitute adverse effects on the River Moy SAC or any other Natura 2000 site, in view of their conservation objectives.

8.4.32. Having reviewed the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it provides adequate information in respect of the baseline conditions, clearly identifies the potential impacts, and uses best scientific information and knowledge. Details of mitigation measures are provided, and they are summarised in Section 7 of the NIS. I am satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for appropriate assessment of the proposed development (see further analysis below).

8.4.33. Appropriate Assessment of Implications of the Proposed Development on each European Site

8.4.34. The following is an assessment of the implications of the project on the relevant conservation objectives of the European site using the best scientific knowledge in the field. All aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are identified and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects are examined and assessed.

8.4.35. I have relied on the following guidance:

- DoEHLG (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- EC (2002) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC
- EC (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- EC (2011) Guidelines on the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in Estuaries and coastal zones.
- EC (2022) Guidance document on assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - A summary (European Commission. Directorate General for Environment).

8.4.36. **Relevant European site:** The following site is subject to appropriate assessment:

- River Moy SAC (Site code: 002298)

8.4.37. A description of this site and its Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests, including any relevant attributes and targets for these sites, are set out in the NIS and outlined in Table 3 below. I have also examined the Natura 2000 data forms as relevant and the Conservation Objectives supporting documents for these sites available through the NPWS website (www.npws.ie).

8.4.38. **Aspects of the proposed development:** The main aspects of the proposed development that could adversely affect the conservation objectives of the European Site include:

- Loss of, or disturbance to habitats or species.

- Potential Impairment of water quality.
- Introduction of invasive species.

8.4.39. **Table 3** summarises the Appropriate Assessment and site integrity test. The Conservation Objectives, targets and attributes as relevant to the identified potential significant effects are examined and assessed in relation to the aspects of the project (alone and in combination with other plans and projects). Mitigation measures are examined, and clear, precise and definitive conclusions reached in terms of adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

8.4.40. Supplemental to the summary tables, any key issues that arose through consultation and through my examination and assessment of the NIS are expanded upon in the text below:

Table 3: River Moy SAC (Site code: 002298)

Key Issues:

- Loss of, or disturbance to habitats or species
- Potential impairment of water quality
- Introduction of invasive species

Conservation Objectives: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002298.pdf

Summary of Appropriate Assessment

Conservation Objective: To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the following:	**Targets & Attributes (as relevant)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**All Mitigation Measures**	**In-combination effects**	**Can adverse effects on site integrity be excluded?**
Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510]	This habitat type is listed in the Statutory Instrument for the SAC but is omitted from the Conservation Objectives document.	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. The closest example of this habitat occurs > 10km over land from the site.	-	-	**Yes**
Alkaline fens [7230]	Stable/ increasing habitat area; no decline in habitat distribution; maintain active peat formation, appropriate natural hydrological regimes,	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this	-	-	**Yes**

	appropriate water quality, and vegetation cover of typical species including brown mosses and vascular plants; cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 10%; cover of disturbed bare ground less than 10% and less than 1% where tufa is present; area showing signs of drainage as a result of drainage ditches or heavy trampling less than 10%.	qualifying interest. The closest example of this terrestrial habitat occurs c. 5.2km over land from the bridge. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.			
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	Stable/ increasing habitat area and woodland size; no decline in habitat distribution; diverse woodland structure with a relatively closed canopy; maintain diversity and extent of community types; seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes in adequate proportions to ensure woodland canopy survival; at least 30m^3/ha of fallen timber greater than 10cm dia. and 30 snags/ha; no decline in veteran trees or indicators of local distinctiveness; native tree cover not less than 95%; variety of typical native species present; negative indicator species,	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. The closest example of this terrestrial habitat occurs c. 8.2km over land from the bridge. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.	-	-	**Yes**

	particularly non-native invasive species, absent or under control.				
Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]	Stable/ increasing habitat area and woodland size; no decline in habitat distribution; diverse woodland structure with a relatively closed canopy; maintain diversity and extent of community types; seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes in adequate proportions to ensure woodland canopy survival; appropriate hydrological regime for maintenance of alluvial vegetation; at least 30m^3/ha of fallen timber greater than 10cm dia. and 30 snags/ha; no decline in veteran trees or indicators of local distinctiveness; native tree cover not less than 95%; variety of typical native species present; negative indicator species, particularly non-native invasive species, absent or under control.	Given the lack of pathways to this riparian habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. The closest example of this habitat occurs c. 21km north west over land from the bridge. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.	-	-	**Yes**
White-clawed Crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes [1092]	No reduction in distribution; juveniles and/or females with eggs in all occupied tributaries; no alien crayfish species;	Species known to occur in the River Moy system and tributaries, which includes the Strade River. No examples of this species	- <u>General Measures:</u> * Appointment of Ecological Clerk of Works to ensure compliance with mitigation	No in combination effect: - Plans subject to AA prior to adoption and	**Yes** Due to mitigation measures, best practice measures and

	no instances of disease; water quality at least Q3-4 at all sites sampled by EPA; no decline in heterogeneity or habitat quality.	were identified during surveys however presence cannot be ruled out. Crayfish are sensitive to disturbance and water quality impacts which may arise, particularly during construction. As such, there is a complete source-pathway-receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this QI. - Risk of impacts to water quality given the nature of the proposed works and the use of heavy machinery and plant in proximity to the river. - Potential for the accidental release of polluting matter from equipment and machinery. - No invasive species were recorded during site visits; however, biosecurity protocols will prevent the spread of aquatic diseases. - No potential for operational stage impacts. The introduction of a concrete invert has been subject to hydraulic assessment and is not anticipated to cause a	and to liaise with IFI and NPWS. * All operations to be carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines relating to control of water pollution and protection of fisheries. * Site manager to monitor weather and no works to take place during heavy rainfall. Dam system will be removed and reinstated as necessary. * Toolbox talks. * Standard working hours. * Measures to prevent/ control spillages. - <u>Watercourse Protection:</u> * Establishment of dry working area by setting up a dam system. * All water pumped from the works area must pass through silt fences before entering the river. * Pipe used to flume flows through the works area will be fitted with a filter to ensure no fish enter the	contain policies and objectives to ensure protection of European sites. - The only EIA Portal projects within the geographical scope of the proposed development are remote from the site and SAC and unlikely to give rise to in-combination effects. They are subject to environmental assessment and associated mitigation such that significant in-combination effects are not likely. - Varying nature and scale of small-scale developments within 1km of the River Moy SAC and connected waterbodies. Such projects must comply with the EPA's Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) (EPA, 2021). - Bridge rehabilitation works proposed at Strade River Bridge (4km downstream). An	implementation of monitoring, no adverse effects on water quality or the designated conservation interests of the European site will occur.

		barrier to fish movements.	pipe. Outfall of pipe will be fitted with a silt sock. * Temporary working platform must be clean and free from foreign debris. No debris or waste material from the works area shall enter the live channel. * Measures for use of primer products. * At no point will any equipment be washed out within the work area or adjacent to a watercourse. * Dissipation of sediment and reinstatement with washed and clean gravel. Removal and disposal of materials used on site, including sandbags, silt fencing and components of temporary working platform. - <u>Biosecurity Protocols:</u> * Implemented on site following the 'Clean-Check-Dry' principle. * Excavator shall be dry, clean and free from debris prior to being brought to site.	NIS has been prepared and given scale, duration and proposed mitigation measures there will be no in-combination effects. - Other activities undertaken by farmers and landowners would include prior consultation with NPWS and compliance with European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations, 2011 (as amended).	

			* Washing down of dam materials and other equipment at suitable remote location. Washed equipment to be left unused for 48 hours once dry. * Operative to disinfect boots and waders (away from river) after entering watercourse to install silt fencing and sandbag dams		
Sea Lamprey Petromyzon marinus [1095]	>75% of main stem length of rivers accessible from estuary; at least three age/size groups present; mean catchment juvenile density at least 1/m^2; no decline in extent and distribution of spawning beds; more than 50% of sample sites positive.	Species occur widely in Irish rive systems and utilise gravels for spawning and corridors for commuting purposes. Species are sensitive to disturbance and water quality impacts which may arise, particularly during construction. As such, there is a complete source-pathway-receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this QI. - Risk of impacts to water quality given the nature of the proposed works and the use of heavy machinery and plant in proximity to the river. - Potential for the accidental release of polluting matter from	- General measures (as above). - Watercourse protection (as above). - Biosecurity protocols (as above).	No in combination effect: - Plans subject to AA prior to adoption and contain policies and objectives to ensure protection of European sites. - The only EIA Portal projects within the geographical scope of the proposed development are remote from the site and SAC and unlikely to give rise to in-combination effects. They are subject to environmental assessment and associated mitigation such that significant in-combination effects are not likely.	**Yes** Due to mitigation measures, best practice measures and implementation of monitoring, no adverse effects on water quality or the designated conservation interests of the European site will occur.
Brook Lamprey Lampetra planeri [1096]	Access to all watercourses down to first order streams; at least three age/size groups present; mean catchment juvenile density at least 2/m^2; no decline in extent and distribution of spawning beds; more than 50% of sample sites positive.				

		equipment and machinery. - No invasive species were recorded during site visits; however, biosecurity protocols will prevent the spread of aquatic diseases. - No potential for operational stage impacts. The introduction of a concrete invert has been subject to hydraulic assessment and is not anticipated to cause a barrier to lamprey movements.		- Varying nature and scale of small-scale developments within 1km of the River Moy SAC and connected waterbodies. Such projects must comply with the EPA's Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) (EPA, 2021). - Bridge rehabilitation works proposed at Strade River Bridge (4km downstream). An NIS has been prepared and given scale, duration and proposed mitigation measures there will be no in-combination effects. - Other activities undertaken by farmers and landowners would include prior consultation with NPWS and compliance with European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations, 2011 (as amended).	

Salmon Salmo salar [1106]	100% of river channels down to 2nd order accessible from estuary; conservation limit for each system consistently exceeded; maintain or exceed 0+ fry mean catchment-wide abundance threshold value- currently set at 17 salmon fry/5 minutes sampling; no significant decline in out-migrating smolt abundance; no decline in no. & distribution of spawning redds due to anthropogenic causes; and water quality at least Q4 at all sampled sites.	Species known to occur in the River Moy system and tributaries, which includes the Strade River. No examples of this species were identified during surveys however presence cannot be ruled out. Salmon are sensitive to disturbance and water quality impacts which may arise, particularly during construction. As such, there is a complete source-pathway-receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this QI. - Risk of impacts to water quality given the nature of the proposed works and the use of heavy machinery and plant in proximity to the river. - Potential for the accidental release of polluting matter from equipment and machinery. - No invasive species were recorded during site visits; however, biosecurity protocols will prevent the spread of aquatic diseases. - No potential for operational stage	- General measures (as above). - Watercourse protection (as above). - Biosecurity protocols (as above).	No in combination effect: - Plans subject to AA prior to adoption and contain policies and objectives to ensure protection of European sites. - The only EIA Portal projects within the geographical scope of the proposed development are remote from the site and SAC and unlikely to give rise to in-combination effects. They are subject to environmental assessment and associated mitigation such that significant in-combination effects are not likely. - Varying nature and scale of small-scale developments within 1km of the River Moy SAC and connected waterbodies. Such projects must comply with the EPA's Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) (EPA, 2021).	**Yes** Due to mitigation measures, best practice measures and implementation of monitoring, no adverse effects on water quality or the designated conservation interests of the European site will occur.

		impacts. The introduction of a concrete invert has been subject to hydraulic assessment and is not anticipated to cause a barrier to fish movements.		- Bridge rehabilitation works proposed at Strade River Bridge (4km downstream). An NIS has been prepared and given scale, duration and proposed mitigation measures there will be no in-combination effects. - Other activities undertaken by farmers and landowners would include prior consultation with NPWS and compliance with European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations, 2011 (as amended).	
Otter Lutra lutra [1355]	No significant decline in distribution or extent of terrestrial, marine and freshwater habitat; no significant decline in couching sites and holts; no significant decline in available fish biomass; and no increase in barrier to connectivity.	While no sign of Otter was recorded, Otter is likely to occur on the Strade River system. Species is sensitive to noise and visual disturbance which may arise, particularly during construction. There is a complete source-pathway-receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this QI.	- General measures (as above). - Watercourse protection (as above). - Biosecurity protocols (as above). - Noise control: * All plant and equipment to be switched off when idling.	No in combination effect: - Plans subject to AA prior to adoption and contain policies and objectives to ensure protection of European sites. - The only EIA Portal projects within the geographical scope of the proposed development are remote	**Yes** Due to mitigation measures, best practice measures and implementation of monitoring, no adverse effects on water quality or the designated conservation interests of the European site will occur.

		No works are proposed at any identified holts or couching sites. - Risk of impacts to water quality given the nature of the proposed works and the use of heavy machinery and plant in proximity to the river. - Potential for the accidental release of polluting matter from equipment and machinery. - No invasive species were recorded during site visits; however, biosecurity protocols will prevent the spread of aquatic diseases. - Potential for noise disturbance from machinery and disturbance due to the presence of personnel. - No potential for operational stage impacts.	* Use of white noise reversing alarms. * Restriction on dropping/ loading of materials to less sensitive hours. * Use of local screening for noisy activities or works with hand tools. * Ensure all plant and equipment is well maintained, clean and lubricated in line with manufacturers' guidelines. - Working hours restricted to standard working hours only and no overnight artificial lighting of the site. - Pre-construction otter survey. If any new holts are identified that are likely to be damaged/disturbed, a derogation licence will be obtained.	from the site and SAC and unlikely to give rise to in-combination effects. They are subject to environmental assessment and associated mitigation such that significant in-combination effects are not likely. - Varying nature and scale of small-scale developments within 1km of the River Moy SAC and connected waterbodies. Such projects must comply with the EPA's Code of Practice: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) (EPA, 2021). - Bridge rehabilitation works proposed at Strade River Bridge (4km downstream). An NIS has been prepared and given scale, duration and proposed mitigation measures there will be no in-combination effects. - Other activities undertaken by farmers and landowners would	

				include prior consultation with NPWS and compliance with European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations, 2011 (as amended).	
To <u>restore</u> the favourable conservation condition of the following:	**Targets & Attributes (as relevant)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**All Mitigation Measures**	**In-combination effects**	**Can adverse effects on site integrity be excluded?**
Active raised bogs [7110]	Restore habitat area; restore habitat distribution and variability; no decline in extent of high bog area; restore appropriate water levels; restore flow patterns; restore adequate transitional areas; restore central ecotope/active flush/soaks/bog woodland as appropriate; restore adequate cover of high quality microtopographical features; restore adequate cover of bog moss species; restore typical active raised bog flora and fauna; maintain features of local distinctiveness; negative physical features absent or insignificant; native negative indicator species at insignificant levels; non-native invasive	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. The closest example of this terrestrial habitat occurs c. 20km over land from the bridge. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.	-	-	**Yes**

	species at insignificant levels and not more than 1% cover; air quality close to natural reference conditions; water quality close to natural reference conditions.				
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	The conservation objective for this habitat is inherently linked to that of Active raised bogs (7110) and a separate conservation objective has not been set.A	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.	-	-	**Yes**
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	This habitat is an integral part of good quality Active raised bogs (7110) and a separate conservation objective has not been set.	Given the lack of pathways to this terrestrial habitat, there is no source-pathway receptor chain for impacts from the proposed works to this qualifying interest. The closest example of this terrestrial habitat occurs c. 5.2km north west over land from the bridge. There is no hydrological connectivity to any example of this habitat type as according to available datasets.	-	-	**Yes**

Overall Conclusion: Integrity Test

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of the proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for the River Moy SAC and that no effects of any significance will occur.

The proposed bridge rehabilitation works are located c. 3.9km upstream of the River Moy SAC. There is a hydrological connection linking the proposed project site to this SAC via the Strade River that the bridge crosses. No in-stream works are proposed within the watercourse, once a dry working area has been established at the bridge by setting up a dam system by hand. Conservation objective targets for the qualifying interest habitats and species could be undermined through reduction in water quality; habitat alteration; indirect disturbance or displacement; and spread of invasive species during the construction phase in combination with other plans and projects.

No habitat loss within the European designated sites will occur and adverse in-combination effects from water contamination, spread of invasive species and disturbance can be effectively prevented by mitigation measures ensuring the protection of the watercourse. These mitigation measures will include the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works, strict water pollution controls (e.g., sandbag dams, silt fences, biosecurity protocols); timing works to avoid sensitive periods for aquatic fauna; pre-construction surveys for new otter holts; noise and lighting controls to minimise disturbance; and measure to address the risk pollution incidents.

Based on the information submitted, surveys carried out analysis provided, I am satisfied that no uncertainty remains.

The proposed development would not delay or prevent the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the River Moy SAC and adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded.

8.4.41. Appropriate Assessment Conclusions

8.4.42. Having carried out screening for appropriate assessment of the proposed rehabilitation works to Knockavrony Bridge, which carries the N5 National Primary Road over the Strade River in the townlands of Knockavrony and Redhill, Co. Mayo, it was concluded that the works may result in significant effects on the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298). Consequently, an Appropriate Assessment was required of the implications of the project on the qualifying features of this site in light of its Conservation Objectives.

8.4.43. Following an Appropriate Assessment, it has been ascertained that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of this European site, or any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. No reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

8.4.44. This conclusion is based on:

- A full and detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed project including proposed mitigation measures and ecological monitoring in relation to the Conservation Objectives of the River Moy SAC.
- Detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed development that could result in significant effects on the European site within a zone of influence of the proposed scheme.
- Application of mitigation measures designed to avoid adverse effects on site integrity and likely effectiveness of same.
- Detailed assessment of in combination effects with other plans and projects including historical projects, current proposals and future plans.
- No reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of the River Moy SAC.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1. On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that the Commission approve the proposed development subject to the reasons and considerations below and

subject to conditions including requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the NIS.

Reasons and Considerations

In coming to its decision, the Commission had regard to the following:

(a) EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),

(b) European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015,

(c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site,

(d) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298),

(e) the policies and objectives of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028,

(f) the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,

(g) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement,

(h) the submissions received in relation to the proposed development, and

(i) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Commission to make a report and recommendation on the matter.

Appropriate Assessment

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298) is the only European Site in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures

contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment.

The Commission completed an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the affected European Site, namely the River Moy SAC (Site Code: 002298) in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an Appropriate Assessment. In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,

ii. the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and

iii. the conservation objectives for the European Site.

In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the Appropriate Assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Site, having regard to the site's conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Site, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not have significant negative effects on the environment or the community in the vicinity, would not give rise to a risk of pollution, would not be detrimental to the visual or landscape amenities of the area, would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area, would not interfere with the existing land uses in the area and would not interfere with traffic and pedestrian

safety. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement or any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.

   Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the environment.

2. The mitigation and monitoring measures identified in the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application shall be implemented in full. Prior to the commencement of development, details of a time schedule for implementation of mitigation measures and associated monitoring shall be prepared by the local authority and placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

   Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.

3. A suitably qualified ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of mitigation measures relating to ecology. The ecologist shall be present during the works. Upon completion of works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist to be kept on file as part of the public record.

   Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and biodiversity.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the project ecologist and relevant statutory agencies, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The CEMP shall include:

    a) all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement,

    b) location and extent of silt fencing to be installed on site,

    c) specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the CEMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness, and

    d) a Traffic Management Plan for the construction phase.

    Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment and the European Site.

5. The following nature conservation requirements shall be complied with:

    a) Prior to the commencement of development, details of measures to protect fisheries and water quality of the river system shall be outlined and placed on file. Full regard shall be had to Inland Fisheries Ireland's published guidelines for construction works near waterways (Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters, 2016). A programme of water quality monitoring shall be prepared in consultation with the contractor, the local authority and relevant statutory agencies and the programme shall be implemented thereafter.

    b) No in-stream works shall take place outside the period 1st July to 30th September, inclusive, without the written approval of the Ecological Clerk of Works. Such approval shall be placed on the public file.

    c) a pre-construction otter survey by a suitability qualified ecologist shall be carried out before works commence.

    d) a pre-construction bat survey shall be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist during the active bat season and any destruction

of bat roosting sites or relocation of bat species shall be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist under a Derogation Licence granted by the Minster of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and nature conservation.

6. The Local Authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall ensure that all plant and machinery used during the works should be thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens.

   Reason: In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the European sites.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Niall Haverty
Senior Planning Inspector

4th February 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	**ACP-323520-25**
Proposed Development Summary	Proposed development of N5 Knockavrony Bridge Rehabilitation Works
Development Address	Knockavrony and Redhill, County Sligo

1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?

☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2.

☐ No, No further action required.

2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?

☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.

EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.

☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3

3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?

☒ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994.

No Screening required.

☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.

EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required

☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?

Yes ☐	
No ☒	**Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)**

Inspector: _____ _Date: _____