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Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Statement

**Newport Ball Ally Path Upgrade and
Footbridge, Newport, Co. Tipperary**

Document Details

Client: Tipperary County Council; Will McGarry & Associates Consulting Engineers

Project Title: Newport Ball Ally Path Upgrade and Footbridge, Newport, Co. Tipperary

Document Title: Natura Impact Statement

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Rev	Status	Date	Author(s)	Reviewed by
00	DRAFT	02/10/2025	DM	JN
01	FINAL	17/10/2025	DM	JN

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1. Introduction

This Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement contains information required for the competent authority to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to evaluate the potential for the proposed works in Newport Co. Tipperary to impact upon the conservation objectives of the Lower Shannon SAC (Site code 002165). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required as likely significant effects upon the conservation objectives of one Natura 2000 sites, arising from the proposed works could not be ruled out at the screening stage.

The report details any likely significant impacts upon of the construction of a footbridge over the Small River, Newport, Co. Tipperary on the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site code 002165) qualifying interests associated with the proposed project. This report includes a general ecological assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on the ecology of the surrounding area, including designated sites. This Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

1.1. Summary of Proposed Works

The development will consist of the construction of a pedestrian bridge across a minor tributary of the Newport River, the Small River to link the park at the Newport Ball Alley to Pound Street L2110 in the town of Newport (Fig. 1, 2). The proposed bridge is approximately 20 m in length, 1.8 m width, spanning the Small River in a North-South orientation between a wooded area at the southern bank to a raised area of parkland on the northern bank (Fig. 2).

Mid-Range Future Scenario (MRFS) water level at the proposed bridge deck location is 52.939mOD, accounting for 1:100-year (1% AEP). The works also include the installation of a broadly circular path extending from the northern end of the bridge into the adjoining park, and a new path linking the bridge to Pound Street to the south. Associated drainage and lampposts will also be installed along the pathways. The works are likely to necessitate the removal of a small number of trees growing on both riverbanks. No in-stream works are envisaged. The bridge will fully span the river with the excavation and formation of bridge abutments c. 2 m back from the channel and built to engineers' specification and details.

The footbridge and adjacent pathways will be lit by 3no. LED lights with luminance of < 0.1lx and colour temperature of <2700 (Fig. 1). Light fixtures will be directional and cowled to limit light spill-over to adjacent river or bank areas. The footbridge will be lit only during the evening so as not to interrupt night-time foraging of bats and otters.

Proposed access to the site is along the trackway to the east of the park that runs broadly parallel and to the north of the Small River to where it joins Pound Street via a bridge over the river (Fig. 1). No vegetation

clearance around or amendments to this track are anticipated to conduct the works.

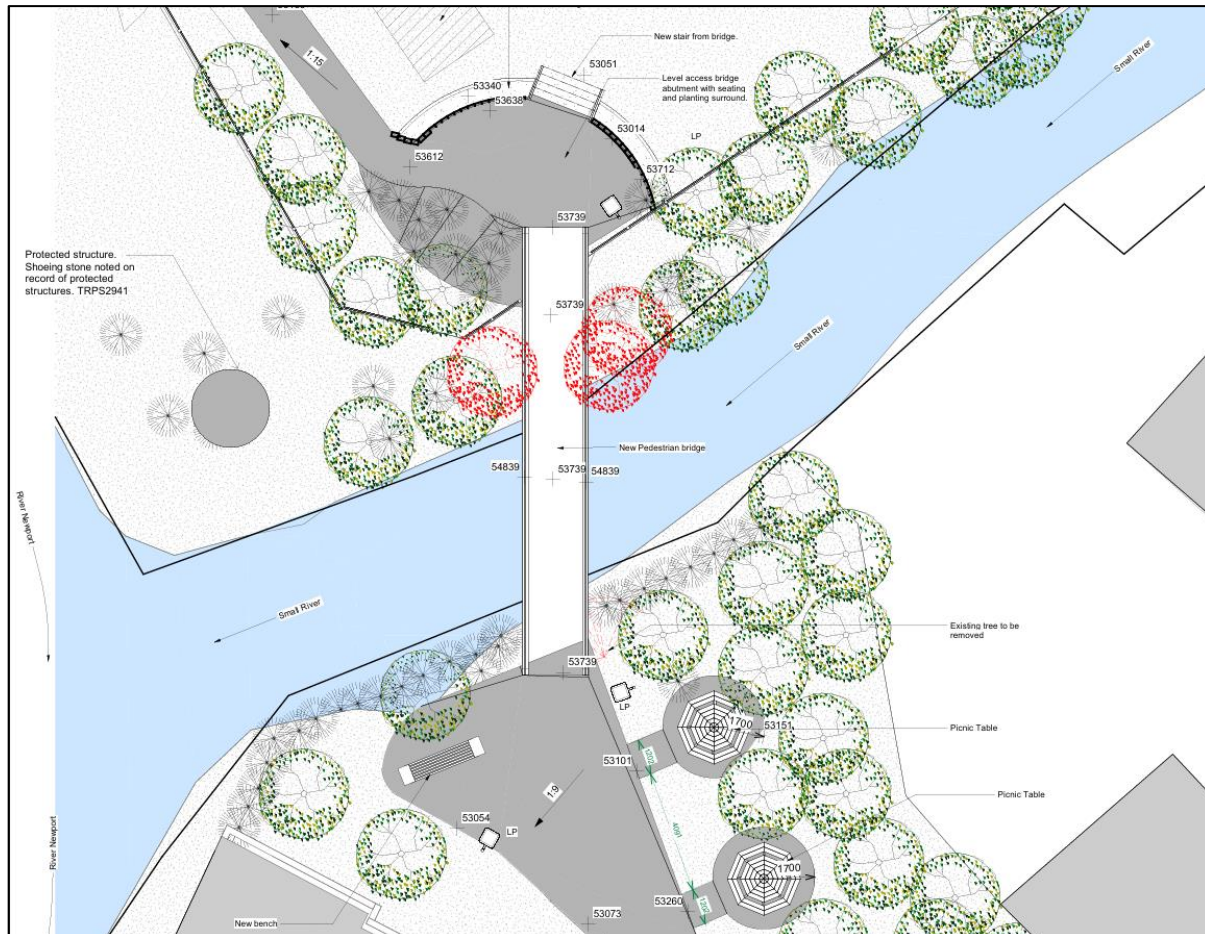


Figure 1 Drawings for proposed footbridge and walkways at Newport Ball Alley. Prepared by Will McGarry & Associates Consulting Engineers.

A summary of the methodology involved is as follows:

1. A silt fence will be installed between the location of the bridge foundations and the riverbank.
2. Bridge abutments will be formed on non-ferrous coated self-screwing piling, removing the need for excavation at the riverbank. Any excavated material will be drawn away from the work site as it is excavated and will not be stored in close proximity to any watercourse. Any excavated ground within the 8m (upstream and downstream) radius of Giant Hogweed will be side-cast on terram at a designated location ahead of burial. Further details are provided in the accompanying Invasive Species Management Plan.
3. A pre-cast concrete deck with upstand beams will be lifted into place, spanning the river resting

on the foundations on either side. A galvanised hand rail will be bolted to the upstand beam.

4. To provide sufficient access to the bridge from the park area on the northern side of the bridge, it is necessary to elevate a c. 50 m² area to meet the bridge deck. This paved area will slightly decrease the floodplain at this part of the park. Resurfacing of the path at the southern side of the bridge is also proposed.
5. Associated drainage and 3no. lampposts will also be installed along the pathways.
6. Earthen berms will be formed either side of the bridge which will act to prevent water entering the watercourse during the operational phase. Portions of the bank which have been stripped or excavated will be reprofiled and lined with bio-degradable coir-mesh, in which willow and alder slips/facines may be placed. This will aid in strengthening the channel banks following construction, enhance hydrological conveyance and promote recovery of the riparian habitat.
7. Plant and machinery will access the site via Pound Street (L2110) and the existing trackway to the east of the site along the northern side of the Small River (Fig. 2). No vegetation clearance or resurfacing of the trackway is proposed to accommodate site traffic.
8. It is envisaged that works will be carried out over 3 – 6 months between the spring and autumn.

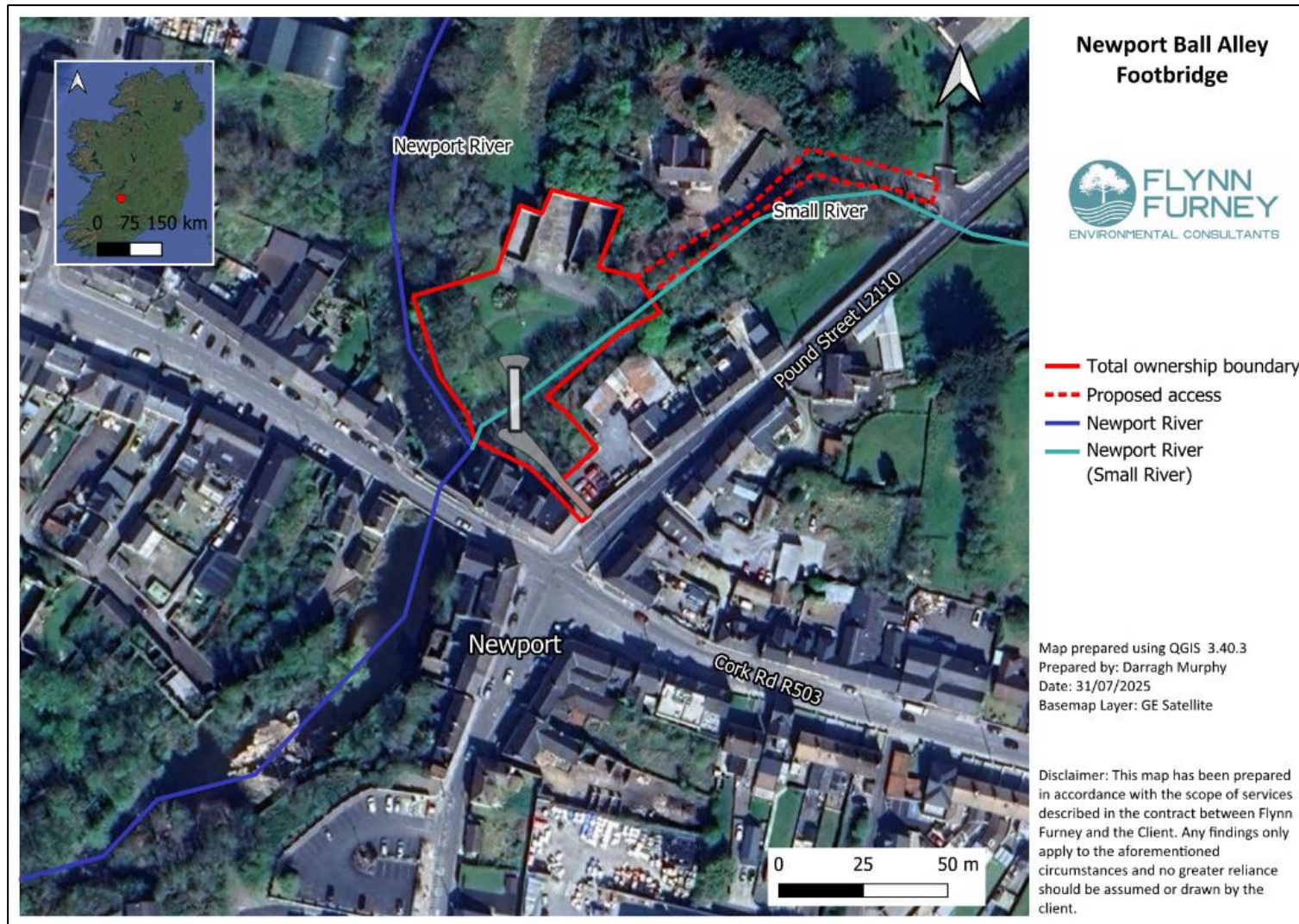


Figure 2 Site of proposed footbridge works over the Small River in the vicinity of the Newport Ball Alley, Newport, Co. Tipperary. Inset: Site location

2. Background to Appropriate Assessment, Natura Impact Assessment

The processes are set out under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive are commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 also known as a Natura Impact Statement).

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions, which govern the conservation, and management of Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication 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"

Where it is obvious or highly likely that a significant impact or impacts will be incurred to the Natura 2000 Site, an Appropriate Assessment is required. This proposed development considered to have the potential to negatively impact upon the conservation objectives of the Lower River Shannon, indicating that an Appropriate Assessment is required.

2.1. The Site and Environs

The development will consist of the construction of a pedestrian bridge across a minor tributary of the Newport River, the Small River to link the park at the Newport Ball Alley to Pound Street L2110 in the town of Newport (Fig. 2, 3).



Figure 3 Watercourses in the vicinity of the proposed footbridge works. The Small River (a tributary of the Newport River) rises to the north east of the site and flows beneath the proposed bridge and joins the Newport River 10 m downstream. Inset: part of the lower River Shannon basin illustrating the contiguous Newport, Kileengarriff and Mulkear rivers

The application site lies within Newport_040 subcatchment in the Lower River Hydrometric Area. The proposed bridge crosses the Small River, a tributary of the Newport River, and joins the Newport River and the Lower Shannon SAC (002165) c. 10 m downstream of the site (Fig. 3). This SAC site contains a great diversity of different Annex I habitats and Annex II species, i.e. natural habitat types and species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation (EU Directive 92/43/EEC). Habitats and species are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1 Qualifying interests (QIs) of the Lower River Shannon SAC

Habitat/Species Natura code No.	Habitat Type Species
[1130]	Estuaries
[1110]	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time
[1140]	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
[1150]	Coastal lagoons
[1160]	Large shallow inlets and bays
[1170]	Reefs
[1220]	Perennial vegetation of stony banks
[1230]	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
[1310]	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
[1330]	Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)
[1410]	Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)
[3260]	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation
[6410]	<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>)
[91E0]	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>)
[1029]	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel)
[1095]	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey)
[1096]	<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey)
[1099]	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey)
[1106]	<i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon)
[1349]	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin)
[1355]	<i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)

3. Ecological Assessment

3.1. Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out as part of this screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the National Parks and Wildlife Service databases on protected sites and species data, and from the Environmental Protection Agency on watercourses.

3.2. Data used to carry out the assessment

The following sources of data were employed:

- Environmental Protection Agency Envision Database.
- EPA Maps (to identify watercourses, hydrology and Natura 2000 site boundaries) § NPWS protected species database and online mapping.

3.3. Stakeholder Consultation

To date consultations with the following Stakeholders has taken place. These are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Summary of Consultations

Stakeholder	Nature of Consultation	Outcome
Zachary Guidera (Nore Vission)	Remote meeting to discuss nature of works, survey findings and proposed mitigations for invasive species and designated sites (6 August 2025)	Positive discussion and recommendations incorporated in to NIS.
Senior Fisheries Officer Inland Fisheries Ireland (Jane Gilleran; IFI)	Phone consultation to discuss the nature of works (7 Aug 2025)	Positive response on proposed works and mitigations. Recommendations included in NIS

3.4. Field Surveys

Walkover surveys were carried out during daylight hours on 14th and 16th July 2025 by two experienced ecologists. The survey encompassed an area within the river corridor and adjacent land, the primary works area, haul route and access route. Baseline ecological conditions were assessed. Habitats were classified according to Fossitt (2000). Where applicable, the habitat types and species usage were recorded (Smith et al. 2011; Scannell and Synnott, 1987; Wyse Jackson et al. 2016). Habitats were classified and dominant plant species noted according to the guidelines given by the JNCC (2010) with reference to Smith et al. (2011) & Scannell and Synnott (1987). A follow-up bat emergence survey was conducted on the evening of 28th July 2025 to identify whether bats were roosting in structures and trees noted as potential roosting locations during the initial daytime surveys.

3.5. Habitats Description

The proposed footbridge crosses a minor tributary of the Newport River (European Code: IE_SH_25N020330), the Small River 15 m upstream of its confluence with the Newport River (Fig. 4). At this location, both rivers are within the Lower Shannon SAC (Site code 002165). The Newport River joins the Mulkear River (IE_SH_25M040590) c. 12.6 km downstream of the site, which flows into the Lower Shannon Estuary (IE_SH_25S012600) a further 8.2 km downstream (Fig. 3 inset).

Habitat types present within and in close proximity to the project area are summarised in Table 3 and fig. 4. The primary habitats proximate to the site are eroding/upland river (**FW1**), as the proposed works will take place next to and over the Small and Newport Rivers, Scattered trees and parkland (**WD5**). Riparian woodland (**WN5**) lines much of the Newport River and the Small River in the area and is represented primarily by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), although sycamore, ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and willow are also frequent along the rivers. In a number of locations along the Newport River and the Small River, stone bank revetments are present (Stonewalls and other stonework; **BL3**). The Small River is enclosed and shaded by the riparian treeline. As such there is minimal macrophyte or epiphyte growth within the channel, although some byrophytes, ferns and ivy are present along the banks.

The urban setting of Newport town is the primary habitat to the south and east of the project area (Buildings and artificial surfaces; **BL3**). There are areas of Mixed broadleaf woodland (WD1) to the north and south of the project area which is dominated by willow, sycamore and alder. Ornamental flowerbeds and borders (BC4) are present within the park area and are comprised of amenity grassland and a number of small flowerbeds and ornamental borders along the bank. Species included Montbretia (*Crocsmia* Spp.), Hydrangea, Creeping St. John's Wort (*Hypericum calycinum*), heather (*Caluna* spp), David's Viburnum (*Viburnum davidii*). Due to the extent of non-native ornamental plants this area is of low ecological value.

Table 3 Summary of the habitats recorded on and surrounding the proposed project site

Habitat Recorded	Fossitt Code	Links with Annex I Habitats
Buildings and Artificial Surfaces	BL3	No
Stonewalls and other stonework	BL1	No
Scattered trees and parkland	WD5	No
Riparian woodland	WN5	No
Flowerbeds and borders	BC4	No
Mixed broadleaved woodland	WD1	No

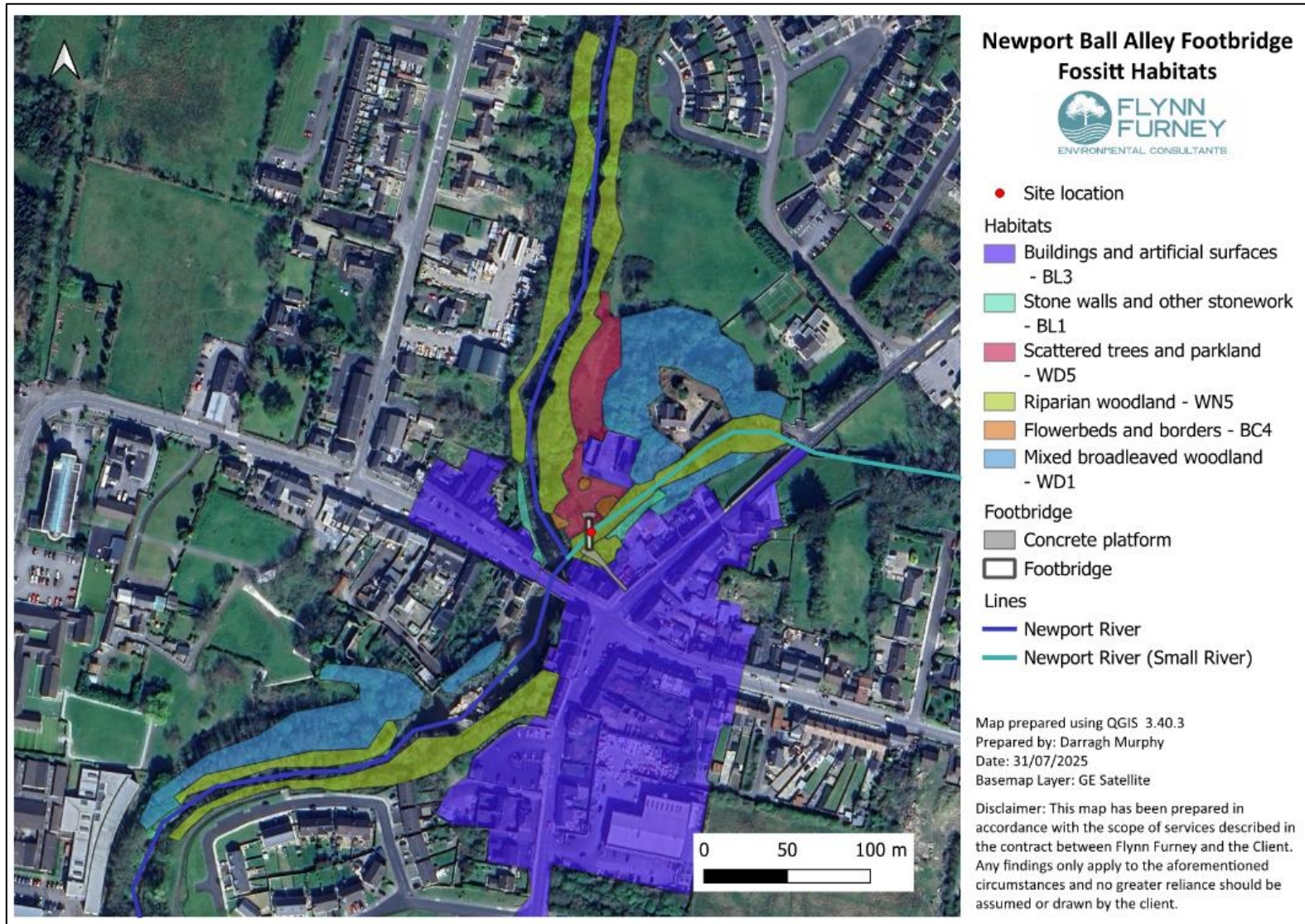


Figure 4 Habitats present in the surveyed area. Habitats classified according to Fossitt (2000)

3.6. Aquatic Species

3.6.1 Fish Species

An instream assessment of habitat and its suitability for different fish species was conducted along the Small and Newport Rivers within the vicinity of the works area and for a distance of 150m upstream and downstream. Habitats and suitability for Salmonids (*Salmo* spp.) and Lamprey (*Lampetra* spp.) were assessed based in criteria set out by Kennedy (1984) and Maitland (2003) respectively.

Habitats in the Small River

Salmonids: The channel is narrow (c. 2m) and incised stone walls present along the eastern banks for extensive stretches. Modified incised banks along the eastern side limit bank overflow into the adjacent park, confining high flows and enhancing scour of the channel. Cobble and boulder substrate with some gravels and limited silty areas. Negligible spawning habitat present due to channelisation of stream, modification channel walls and domestic sewage pollution. Salmon stocks above the Lower Shannon impoundments, such as the Annacotty Weir c. 20km downstream of Newport, are reported to be significantly below conservation limits (NPWS 2012).

Lamprey: The channel is narrow (c. 2m) and incised stone walls present along the eastern banks for extensive stretches. Modified incised banks along the eastern side limit bank overflow into the adjacent park, confining high flows and enhancing scour of the channel. Cobble and boulder substrate with some gravels and limited silty areas. Negligible spawning habitat present due to channelisation of stream, modification channel walls and domestic sewage pollution. River Lamprey redds were observed at Killeenagarraiff bridge, c. 10.3 km downstream of Newport during 2023 IFI surveys. The Annacotty Weir c. 20km downstream of Newport is known to be a substantial barrier to Lamprey migration upstream so it is not deemed likely that significant numbers of lamprey are present within the Small River.

Habitats in the Newport River

Salmonids: Habitat present represented good quality nursery habitat for juvenile salmonids. Adult salmonid habitat was present upstream and downstream of the park along the Newport River. Spawning habitat was present in many areas. Cobble and gravel was the dominant substrate present with sand and mud present in the margins in discrete areas. The channel banks are often incised and modified, however, with stone walls and gabions present along extensive stretches. These modifications limit the extent of sand and mud areas, producing a mainly cobble and stone substrate and incised banks which retain high flows. Additionally, the Small River receives occasional pulses and of pollutants from adjoining domestic and urban sewers, reducing the water quality and likely affecting macroinvertebrate communities within the streambed.

Lamprey: Spawning habitat was present in many areas and is most likely suited to Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), although records of lamprey redds in the wider catchment refer only to River Lamprey redds were observed at Killeenagarraiff bridge, c. 10.3 km downstream of Newport during 2022/23 IFI surveys. Depositing substrates, which are important for lamprey ammocoetes, were present in discrete areas along the Newport River, although localised pollution are likely to inhibit lamprey populations.

3.6.2 Freshwater Pearl Mussel

A dedicated Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) survey was not conducted as instream works are not required. This species is a Qualifying Interest of Lower River Shannon SAC site in the Cloon River sub-catchment only, which is not hydrologically connected to this catchment

3.7. Mammal Activity

Some mammal paths were located at the site which were likely from otter and fox which are known to utilise waterways and riparian zones throughout the lower Shannon. A dedicated otter survey, in accordance with NRA (2009) guidelines was conducted 150m upstream and downstream of the proposed works area, along the Small and Newport Rivers. 2 no. otter spraint were recorded along the Newport River (Fig. 5). Dedicated otter surveys were conducted on the 14th and 28th July reaching 150m upstream and downstream of the works along the Newport River and Small River. No holts were identified along the survey area. As noted previously, the banks of both rivers are highly modified in sections and the presence of stone walls and nearby houses limit available ground for holts.

Soprano and Common Pipistrelles were recorded foraging along the Newport and Small Rivers, as well as over the park area during surveying on 28th July, but emergences were not observed from any of the structures identified as potential bat structures (Fig. 5). Riparian vegetation in the area provide foraging corridors for bats.

3.8. Breeding Birds

All species of wild bird that occur naturally in Ireland are fully protected at all times by the Wildlife Act and relevant amending legislation. Similarly, all birds naturally occurring in the wild state are afforded a measure of protection by the EU Birds Directive, but derogations may reduce protection for specific reasons. As such, any vegetation clearance must be carried out outside of the bird nesting season (March 1st - August 31st).

A dedicated bird survey was not carried out, however, during the survey the majority of birds seen and heard were typical of species within an urban setting. No nesting was recorded at the site. 3 no. Alder trees may need to be removed in order to provide space within the works area, and to accommodate the bridge abutments on the eastern bank which are likely to occupy part of the root zone of adjacent trees.

It is intended to replace any riparian habitat lost through replanting in the immediate vicinity of the bridge. translocate these trees and re-plant upstream of the works area. Root systems of other trees to the west of the works area will not be disturbed by proposed works due to their distance from the proposed works area.

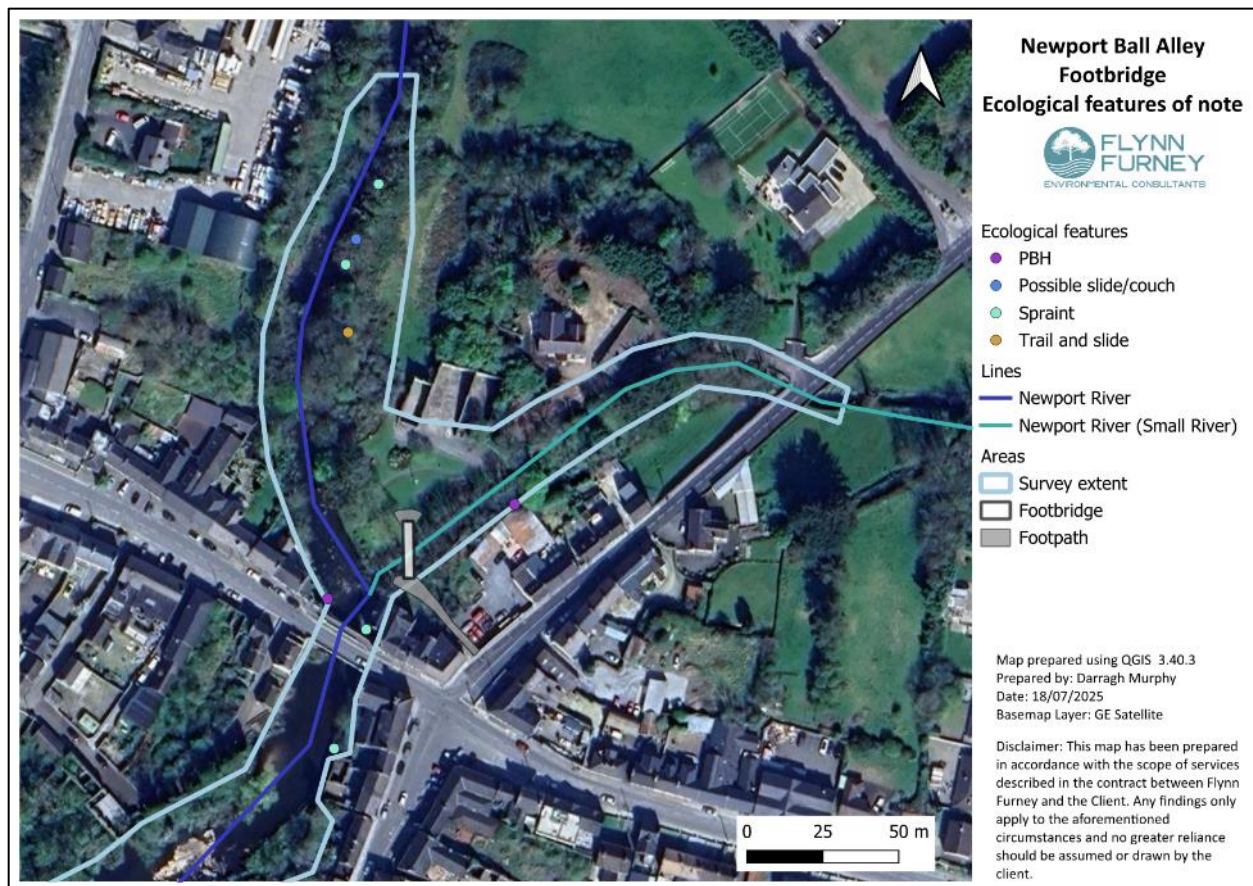


Figure 5 Ecological features of note within the area surveyed on 14th July 2025 around the proposed footbridge works in Newport, Co. Tipperary. Potential bat habitats (PBH) were noted within the old bridge structure over the Newport River and within a stone opening/doorway on the southern bank of the Small River c. 50 m upstream of the works. Signs of otter included spraint, slides and trails along the main channel of the Newport River.

3.9. Amphibian

An amphibian survey was not carried out as part of this project, due to the lack of suitable habitat for spawning Common frog (*Rana temporaria*) or Smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) within the proposed works area.

3.10. Invasive Species

Four regulated Schedule 1 invasive species were recorded within and adjacent to the site and their locations are highlighted in fig. 7. An invasive species management plan has been produced which provides details on the recommended mitigation to effectively control the species prior to the proposed works occurring and to limit their spread thereafter. Details on the IAPS recorded within and close the site are summarised below.

- Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Giant hogweed is present at numerous locations throughout the surveyed area, including in the immediate vicinity of the proposed footbridge on the north and south banks of the Small River (Fig. 5). Giant hogweed was present in small stands of 3 or fewer plants. Mature plants bear bristles on the leaves and stems. The sap is toxic, causing severe acute reactions upon exposure. The plant's presence in the immediate vicinity of the works poses a risk to project personnel. Plants may produce over 50,000 viable seed heads which are dispersed by wind or via streams and rivers. Substantial seed-bases of Giant hogweed may be present around mature plants, potentially necessitating the excavation ground in the vicinity of plants as well as treatment of individual plants to achieve eradication. Disturbance of plants may further increase its presence in the area. Plants upstream may continue to act as a source during the works period, especially where there are exposed areas of ground

- Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonicum*)

Japanese knotweed is present in two locations on the banks of the main channel of the Newport River (Fig. 6, 7). This plant can spread via seeds, horizontally through rhizomes or if plant fragments or rhizomes are disturbed and scattered. In this manner, the plant is common along many waterways and roads across Ireland as soil and plant fragments are dislodged and carried along streams and roads. The plant is not present in the immediate vicinity of the proposed works, being confined to the banks upstream and downstream along the Newport River. It is not deemed necessary that these stands are treated but its presence throughout the area does pose a risk to exposed ground where it may more easily propagate. As is the case with giant hogweed, the duration and extent of exposed ground for the proposed works should be minimised to limit the chance of propagation of these IAPS.



Figure 6 Large infestation of Japanese Knotweed on the main channel of the Newport River, c. 100 m upstream of the proposed footbridge

- *Rhododendron ponticum*

R. ponticum is present c. 100 m upstream of the proposed works area along the Small River (Fig. 7). The works are not likely to disturb the plant but exposed ground created by the works may encourage propagation of seeds carried by wind or along the Small River during the works period. *R. ponticum* produces many thousands of seeds and, once established, can outcompete native flora.

- Himalayan knotweed (*Persicaria walliichii*)

This species is present along the southern bank of the Newport River, c. 80 m downstream of the works. It does not pose any immediate risk to the works (Fig. 7).



Figure 7 First schedule invasive alien plant species in the vicinity of the works area as observed during surveying on 14th July 2025

4. Assessment of Impacts

The following risks, arising from the proposed development, are as follows:

- Impacts on water quality due to risk from construction and operational related run-off of silt, sedimentation and contaminants.
- Disturbance and increasing the distribution of Schedule 1 Invasive Alien Plant Species
- Interruption of bat foraging corridors through vegetation removal in vicinity of footbridge.

An assessment of impacts takes into consideration specific impacts, their extent and time of occurrence in relation to project phase.

Table 4 lists the qualifying interests and / or aspects of conservation importance within the SAC, distance from project site, potential impacts and screening verdict.

Table 4 Annex I Habitats and Annex II Species from Lower River Shannon SAC (002165) in relation to the project site, relevance to project, potential impacts and screening verdict.

Annex I Habitats / Annex II Species	Relevance to Project	Potential Impacts	Screening Verdict
Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Estuaries [1130]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Coastal lagoons [1150]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Reefs [1170]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas. Present downstream in Limerick City and in an unconnected part of the Mulkear Catchment	Screened out
Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]	Nil	Not present in vicinity of the site. May be present in separate subcatchments of and upstream in the Shannon	Screened out

Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]	Nil	Present in an adjoining up separate catchment of the Killeenagarraiff near Clonsingle Bridge (site NSNW 1286). No pathway for interaction.	Screened out
<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]	Nil	<i>Margaritifera</i> population recorded in the Cloon River, Co. Clare. This is the only river in the Lower River Shannon SAC where Freshwater Pearl Mussel are a Qualifying Interest. No pathway for interaction due to lack of hydrological connectivity and distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
<i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]	Potential	Lamprey spawning is unlikely in the Small River although it is likely to occur downstream after it joins the Newport River. Release of silt and other pollutants from the site during construction may impact lamprey. Barriers to migration are present downstream of the site including multiple culverts, and a weir and sluice at Barrington's Bridge	Screened in
<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	Potential	Lamprey spawning is unlikely in the Small River although it is likely to occur downstream. Release of silt and other pollutants from the site during construction may impact lamprey. Barriers to migration are present downstream of the site including multiple culverts, and a weir and sluice at Barrington's Bridge. Brook Lamprey spawning has been recorded in the Killeenagarraiff 10km downstream of the site in 2023 (IFI, 2023), although redds for Brook lamprey have not been reported in the Killeenagarraiff or Newport in recent years.	Screened in
<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]	Potential	Lamprey spawning is unlikely in the Small River although it is likely to occur downstream. Release of silt and other pollutants from the site during construction may impact lamprey. Barriers to migration are present downstream of the site including multiple culverts, and a weir and sluice at Barrington's Bridge. River Lamprey redds have been recorded in the	Screened in

		Killeenagarraiff 10km downstream of the site in 2023 (IFI, 2023).	
Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]	Nil	Salmon spawning is unlikely in the Small River although it is likely to occur downstream. Release of silt and other pollutants from the site during construction may impact spawning salmon in the Newport River. Barriers to migration are present downstream of the site including multiple culverts, and a weir and sluice at Barrington's Bridge	Screened in
Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	Nil	No pathway for interaction due to distance from suitable areas.	Screened out
Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Nil	Signs of otter evident at and in the environs of the site but no otter holts were identified. Low substrate suitability for holts in the 150m zones upstream and downstream of the works. Proposed works area not likely to disturb otters directly, although siltation during construction may affect foraging and presence of prey.	Screened in

4.1 Impact Prediction

Impact prediction identifies the construction and operation related impacts associated with the proposed works on the qualifying interests the Lower Shannon SAC (Site code 002165). An analysis of impact requires the identification of the type and magnitude of potential impacts; direct and indirect; short and long term; construction, operational and decommissioning effects; and isolated, interactive and cumulative effects.

Impacts are described here in the absence of mitigation. Section 4 describes the mitigation measures that aim to avoid, reduce / minimise or remediate the significance of the potential impacts identified in this section.

Based on EC (2000) and CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (CIEEM, 2018), impacts are listed as significant using a combination of professional judgement and criteria or standards where available. The duration and severity of the impacts are determined using the following criteria (EPA, 2002):

- Temporary: up to 1 year
- Short-term: from 1-7 years
- Medium-term: 7-15 years
- Long-term: 15-60 years
- Permanent: over 60 years

The probability of an impact occurring follows the IEEM guidelines (IEEM, 2006). The probability of impact is categorised as follows:

- Certain/Near Certain: probability estimated at 95% chance or higher
- Probable: probability estimated 50–95%
- Unlikely: probability estimated 5–50%
- Extremely Unlikely: probability estimated at less than 5%

4.2 Rationale for Impact Assessment

Table 5 Description of potential impacts associated with QI species and habitats in the Lower Shannon SAC (Site code 002165).

Potential Impacts	Potentially Impacted Qualifying Interest	Impact Duration	Nature of Impact	Probability	Mitigation Required
Impacts on water quality due to risk from construction and operational related run-off of silt, sedimentation and contaminants.	Sea Lamprey, <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>	Temporary	Indirect	Unlikely	Yes
	Brook Lamprey, <i>Lampetra planeri</i>	Temporary	Indirect	Unlikely	Yes
	River Lamprey, <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>	Temporary	Indirect	Unlikely	Yes
	Salmon, <i>Salmo salar</i>	Temporary	Indirect	Unlikely	Yes
	Otter, <i>Lutra lutra</i>	Temporary	Indirect	Unlikely	Yes

5. Mitigation Measures

A review of the elements of the proposed works indicates that there is a risk of adverse effects to the integrity of adjacent Natura 2000 sites qualifying interests, if appropriate mitigation measures are not undertaken. Mitigation measures are designed to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive Article 6 requirements.

The main elements of the proposed project which may affect protected species are associated with the loss of sediments and hydrocarbons to the Newport River. This may lead to changes in water quality. There is also the potential for disturbance impacts on aquatic species habitat and foraging activity during works.

The following mitigation measures are outlined in order to avoid the aforementioned impacts:

- A detailed construction environmental management plan (CEMP) will be prepared by the contractor. It will take the mitigation contained within this report into account. Further recommendations from Inland Fisheries Ireland and National Parks and Wildlife Service, along with planning conditions from the Local Authority, will be included in the plan prior to the commencement of works.
- An Invasive Species Management Plan has been drawn up and will be implemented by the contractor prior to the commencement of works.
- Inland Fisheries Ireland and National Parks and Wildlife Service will be informed of the start date.
- The contractor shall provide a toolbox to all site personnel prior to the commencement of works.
- Works areas will be delineated prior to works commencing, to avoid disturbance in areas where it is not necessary.
- Works will be conducted within the applicable project works area by suitably qualified personnel only.
- There is no requirement for any machinery to enter the river at any time during the construction or operational phase.
- For the construction and operational phases, access to the northern side of the river will be via an existing track from Pound Road. This trackway has been assessed by to be suitable for transport of materials and to carry any site plant or machinery required for the works. Access to the southern side of the river will be via an existing lane from Pound Street but is not wide enough

for large machinery. There is no requirement to create new access tracks for the proposed bridge as ground conditions are suitable for machinery access in their current state.

- Works will only be conducted during times of dry weather only and when water levels are low within the Small River. The forecast will be monitored throughout works by the contractor. Should a flood be anticipated, any equipment used for the construction of the bridge will be temporarily stored on the northern side of the river away from the flood risk zone, as detailed within the Flood Risk Assessment.
- Works will take place outside of bat emergence and foraging periods. During the operational phase, lighting will be LED cowed down lights for the walk way only, south side of the Small river with one light on the other side of the bank at the bridge. Lighting at the lane where access to the existing houses is proposed dusk to dawn as it currently is. Lights will be directional with illuminance of <0.1lx and colour of <2700K to reduce impacts on foraging bats and otters.
- Machinery used will be in good working order and checked prior to works commencing. Regular checks of hydraulic and fuel pipes will be conducted by trained personnel only. Any maintenance required will be undertaken in a designated area on an impermeable surface.
- Machinery and plant entering the site will be cleaned of any soil or plant fragments before entering the site. Any machinery interacting with IAPS (e.g. Giant Hogweed along the Small River) will be decontaminated on-site in a designated wash-out area following IAPS-excavation works and prior to being utilised for other works.
- Emergency spill kits will be kept on-site at all times. Used products will be placed in disposal bags and secured. Disposal of used products will be carried out according to local waste disposal regulations.
- Machinery will not be refuelled within 25m of any watercourse. All refuelling will be conducted in a designated area on an impermeable surface.
- Hazardous materials will not be stored close to the river and will only be kept in a designated area and used by trained personnel only.
- Works will avoid dawn and dusk and will not exceed 10 hours in any 24-hour period.
- Where the ground allows, fencing will be erected on the downslope side of the works areas. No vegetation shall be removed to facilitate the installation of silt fencing. All silt fencing shall be embedded to fencing design standard. Drainage and berms will be in place upslope of the works area to direct overland flow away from excavations or concrete areas.

- All material excavated to form bridge footings, which is infested with invasive alien plant species, will be removed offsite. This is in accordance with the Invasive Species Management Plan.
- Whilst excavations are relatively shallow, e.g. the clearance of bank vegetation and trees, groundwater may be present. If this is the case, the use of a pump may be required to dewater small amounts of water from the excavation. Discharged water will be directed to a vegetated area at least 25m from the river. Silt fencing will be setup on the downslope side of the discharge point.
- If works do not commence within 12 months of the initial ecological surveys, further mammal surveys will be required to be conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist. If survey results differ from original findings, NPWS & IFI will be consulted and new mitigation measures will be included within the CEMP.
- 3 no. immature Alder trees may need to be removed in order to provide space within the works area. These do not provide supporting habitat for otter due to their sparse nature and distance from other vegetation/river. A bird nesting survey will be conducted by an ecologist prior to the removal of these trees if removal is proposed within the bird nesting season (1 March to 31 August). Excavations will be immediately backfilled with clean soil and dressed with grass seed. Immature willow and alder will be planted along the geo-coir lined bank following the works and bank re-profiling. Slips should be 30cm long, with 25cm of the slip buried into the ground. This action has been agreed with IFI and will improve the riparian corridor along the river. Furthermore, it will enhance mammal connectivity for species such as otter and bat.
- All silt fencing will be removed upon the completion of the project and disposed of in a licensed waste facility.
- Rubbish will be collected daily and disposed of correctly. Recycling is to be conducted when feasible and practical.
- The services of a suitably qualified ecologist will be engaged for the project to act as the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). It will be the responsibility of the ECoW to advise, monitor and keep a record of works occurring onsite. Liaison will be maintained with IFI & NPWS, if required.

With the above mitigation measures adhered to during the construction phase of this project, it is considered that no significant impacts would be envisaged, on the Lower Shannon SAC and the significance of impacts may be rated as neutral.

5.1 Residual and Cumulative Impacts

Residual impacts are impacts that remain, once mitigation has been implemented or, impacts that cannot be mitigated. Provided all mitigation measures are implemented in full and remain effective throughout the construction phase, no significant residual or cumulative impacts on the Lower River Shannon SAC are expected from the proposed development.

6. Finding of No Significant Effects

Table 6 Findings of no significant effects

Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix	
Name of Project	Newport Ball Ally Footbridge
Name and Location of Natura 2000 site	Works will be undertaken within c. 10m of the Lower River Shannon SAC on the banks of the Small River, Newport.
Description of Project	The proposed project involves the construction of a foot bridge over the Small River to improve pedestrian access to the Newport Ball Alley park area. The construction of the bridge is single span with an abutment either side of the river. Walkway areas on either side of the bridge will be constructed/resurfaced and some bat and otter-friendly lighting will be installed along the pathways.
Is the project directly connected or necessary to the management of the site?	No, although the removal of invasive plants (Giant Hogweed) along the banks of the Small River will improve the habitat of the river bank, and in the safety of people utilising the park. Reprofilling and planting of disturbed riverbanks within the construction area may aid in habitat connectivity along the river and reduce bank erosion, thereby improving habitat quality downstream for Qualifying Interests such as Brook Lamprey, Salmon and Freshwater Pearl Mussel, if present. Otter will also benefit indirectly from this project.
Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?	No. As it is considered that no significant effects will be incurred upon the receiving environment, once mitigation is followed, then there will be no other projects or plans that can affect the site.
The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site	With the aforementioned mitigation measures adhered to during the construction and operational phase of this project, it may be considered that the significance of impacts may be rated as neutral. It is considered that this project will directly help to prevent the decline of habitat quality downstream for Qualifying Interests of this Natura 2000 site.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	This is a short-term construction project which will take an estimated 4 weeks to complete. Mitigation has been outlined for the construction and operational phase of the proposed plan. There is no requirement for instream works. A Site-Specific Stage 3 Flood Risk Assessment was carried out which concluded the proposed bridge design would not interfere with

	the hydraulic characteristics of the watercourse in a 1% AEP fluvial flood flow (and climate change scenario).
Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive	Taking short term to residual impacts into consideration, it is considered likely that there will be no significant negative impacts upon any Qualifying Interests of the Lower River Shannon SAC.
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
Who carried out the assessment?	Darragh Murphy, BA, MSc, PhD. Ecologist; Claudia Pascali, BSc. Ecologist; Jason Nash, BSc, MIFM, MCIEEM. Fisheries and Environmental Consultant.
Sources of Data	EPA, NPWS, IFI, Tipperary County Council, National Planning Application Database, An Bord Pleanála's online database.
Level of Assessment Completed	Stage II Appropriate Assessment, Natura Impact Statement
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed	Full results included within this report.

6.1 Conclusion

With the mitigation measures outlined in this document, this Stage II Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Statement has concluded that the proposed construction works along the Small River at the Newport Ball Alley, will not lead to any significant impacts upon the designated Lower River Shannon SAC Natura 2000 site identified.

Therefore, the Appropriate Assessment process is not required to proceed any further.

7. References

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