

6.2 APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 6 – Value of Ecological Resources and EPA Impact Assessment Criteria

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Value of Ecological Resources

The criteria outlined in the table below, taken from the *Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes* published by the NRA, were used for assigning value to designated sites, habitats and species within the Site of the Proposed Development and surrounding area.

TABLE A2.1. DESCRIPTION OF VALUES FOR ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES BASED ON GEOGRAPHIC HIERARCHY OF IMPORTANCE (NRA, 2009B).

Importance	Criteria
International Importance	- 'European Site' including Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Community Importance (SCI), Special Protection Area (SPA) or proposed Special Area of Conservation. - Proposed Special Protection Area (pSPA). - Site that fulfils the criteria for designation as a 'European Site' (see Annex III of the Habitats Directive, as amended). - Features essential to maintaining the coherence of the Natura 2000 Network - Site containing 'best examples' of the habitat types listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. - Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the national level) of the following: - o Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in Article 4(2) of the Birds Directive; and/or - o Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the Habitats Directive - Ramsar Site (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially Waterfowl Habitat 1971). - World Heritage Site (Convention for the Protection of World Cultural & Natural Heritage, 1972). - Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO Man & The Biosphere Programme) - Site hosting significant species populations under the Bonn Convention (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 1979). - Site hosting significant populations under the Berne Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, 1979). - Biogenetic Reserve under the Council of Europe. - European Diploma Site under the Council of Europe. - Salmonid water designated pursuant to the European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations, 1988, (S.I. No. 293 of 1988).
National Importance	- Site designated or proposed as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). - Statutory Nature Reserve. - Refuge for Fauna and Flora protected under the Wildlife Acts. - National Park. - Undesignated site fulfilling the criteria for designation as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA); Statutory Nature Reserve; Refuge for Fauna and Flora protected under the Wildlife Act; and/or a National Park. - Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the national level) of the following: - o Species protected under the Wildlife Acts; and/or - o Species listed on the relevant Red Data list. - o Site containing 'viable areas' of the habitat types listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive
County Importance	- Area of Special Amenity. - Area subject to a Tree Preservation Order. - Area of High Amenity, or equivalent, designated under the County Development Plan. - Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the County level) of the following: - o Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in Article 4(2) of the

Importance	Criteria
	Birds Directive; - Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the Habitats Directive; - Species protected under the Wildlife Acts; and/or - Species listed on the relevant Red Data list. - Site containing area or areas of the habitat types listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive that do not fulfil the criteria for valuation as of International or National importance. - County important populations of species; or viable areas of semi-natural habitats; or natural heritage features identified in the National or Local BAP; if this has been prepared. - Sites containing semi-natural habitat types with high biodiversity in a county context and a high degree of naturalness, or populations of species that are uncommon within the county. - Sites containing habitats and species that are rare or are undergoing a decline in quality or extent at a national level.
Local Importance (higher value)	- Locally important populations of priority species or habitats or natural heritage features identified in the Local BAP, if this has been prepared; - Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the Local level) of the following: - Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in Article 4(2) of the Birds Directive; - Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the Habitats Directive; - Species protected under the Wildlife Acts; and/or o - Species listed on the relevant Red Data list. - Sites containing semi-natural habitat types with high biodiversity in a local context and a high degree of naturalness, or populations of species that are uncommon in the locality; - Sites or features containing common or lower value habitats, including naturalised species that are nevertheless essential in maintaining links and ecological corridors between features of higher ecological value.
Local Importance (lower value)	- Sites containing small areas of semi-natural habitat that are of some local importance for wildlife; - Sites or features containing non-native species that is of some importance in maintaining habitat links.

EPA Impact Assessment Criteria

In line with the draft EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022), the following terms are defined when evaluating and quantifying the quality, significance, extent/context, probability and duration/frequency of effects.

TABLE A3.1. DEFINITION OF QUALITY, SIGNIFICANCE, EXTENT/CONTEXT, PROBABILITY AND DURATION/FREQUENCY OF EFFECTS.

Term	Definition
Quality of Effects	
Positive	A change which improves the quality of the environment (for example, by increasing species diversity, or improving the reproductive capacity of an ecosystem, or by removing nuisances or improving amenities).
Neutral	No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
Negative/Adverse	A change which reduces the quality of the environment (for example, lessening species diversity or diminishing the reproductive capacity of

Term	Definition
	an ecosystem, or damaging health or property or by causing nuisance).
Significance of Effects	
<i>Imperceptible</i>	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
<i>Not Significant</i>	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
<i>Slight</i>	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
<i>Moderate</i>	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
<i>Significant</i>	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
<i>Very Significant</i>	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
<i>Profound</i>	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics. No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error
Extent and Context of Effects	
Extent	Describe the size of the area, the number of sites and the proportion of a population affected by an effect.
Context	Describe whether the extent, duration or frequency will conform or contrast with established (baseline) conditions (is it the biggest, longest effect ever?)
Probability of Effects	
<i>Likely</i>	The effects that can reasonably be expected to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.
<i>Unlikely</i>	The effects that can reasonably be expected not to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.
Duration and Frequency of Effects	
<i>Momentary</i>	Effects lasting from seconds to minutes.
<i>Brief</i>	Effects lasting less than a day
<i>Temporary</i>	Effects lasting less than a year.
<i>Short-term</i>	Effects lasting one to seven years.
<i>Medium-term Effects</i>	Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.
<i>Long-term</i>	Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.
<i>Permanent</i>	Effects lasting over sixty years.
<i>Reversible</i>	Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration.

Term	Definition
Frequency	Describe how often the effect will occur (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually).

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