Appendix 12-2. Baseline Report - Amphibian Technical Appendix

Dublin Airport (Passenger Capacity) Act 2026

EIAR Appendix 12-2

Baseline Report - Amphibian Technical Appendix

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Delivering a better world

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

AECOM was commissioned by daa to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which presents the Principal Assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Order on biodiversity. The assessment compares the 2029 Permitted Operation and 2029 Proposed Operation scenarios in accordance with the project-wide assessment framework described in Chapter 5: Methodology (EIAR Volume 2).

This Technical Appendix to Chapter 12: Biodiversity (EIAR Volume 2) documents the desk study and field survey carried out for the amphibian species smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and common frog *Rana temporaria* within the Dublin Airport Site (subject of the Proposed Order) and surrounding lands. Amphibian surveys were carried out between 2019 and 2024.

This Technical Appendix is structured as followed:

- **Section 1: Introduction**
- **Section 2: Legislative and Planning Policy Context** provides an overview of relevant international and national nature conservation legislation and national and local planning policies related to biodiversity and nature conservation
- **Section 3: Methods** describes the desk study and field survey methods used to assess the presence or likely absence of important amphibian species
- **Section 4: Results** set out the results of the desk study and field survey
- **Section 5: Summary** details the key findings of the desk study and field survey
- **Section 6: Figures**

1.2 Quality Assurance & Statement of Authority

This Report and the desk study and field surveys described within it have been completed in accordance with the AECOM Integrated Management System (IMS). The IMS places great emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, and quality, as well as covering all aspects of environmental and Health and Safety management. All staff members are committed to establishing and maintaining our accreditation to the relevant international standards, including ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018. In addition, the IMS requires careful selection and monitoring of the performance of all sub-consultants and contractors.

Details of the qualifications and experience of the AECOM ecologists involved in preparing this Technical Appendix, including in completing the desk study and field survey, are given in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Quality Assurance

Staff Member	Qualifications	Role in Preparing this Technical Appendix	Experience
Laura Cappelli (Senior Ecologist)	• BSc (Hons) in Conservation Biology (1st Class) • MSc (Hons) in Biodiversity and Conservation (1st Class)	Laura carried out field surveys following good practice guidelines. She also wrote this Technical Appendix.	Laura has over six years' experience as a professional ecologist on projects for private and public sector clients. She has experience in EcIA and has carried out several surveys for amphibians including common frog spawn surveys and smooth newt torching surveys.
Alison Donnelly (Senior Ecologist)	• BSc (Hons) in Marine Science (2.1) • MRes (Hons) in Marine Biology (2.1)	Alison carried out field surveys following good practice guidelines.	Alison has over six years' experience as a professional ecologist on projects for private and public sector clients. She has experience in EcIA and has carried out several surveys for amphibians including common frog spawn surveys and smooth newt torching surveys.
Chris Hill (Technical Director	• BSc (Hons) in Zoology • MRes (Hons) in Ecology and Environmental Sustainability • Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM)	Chris co-authored this Technical Appendix.	Chris has over 17 years' experience as a professional ecologist on projects for private and public sector clients. He has extensive experience in Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) at all stages of the process, including screening / scoping, baseline data collection, assessment and reporting. He has conducted many surveys for amphibians and used the results obtained to identify the impacts of infrastructure developments and to devise suitable mitigation / enhancement strategies.

2. Legislative and Planning Policy Context

2.1 Relevant Legislation

Smooth newt and common frog are protected under the Wildlife Acts[1]. Under the Wildlife Acts, it is an offence to injure smooth newt or common frog (or their young), or to wilfully interfere with or disturb smooth newt or common frog breeding or resting places.

The Irish conservation status of these amphibian species are Least Concern[2].

2.2 Relevant Planning Policy & Guidance

The following planning policy is also relevant to protected and important amphibian species:

- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030[3]
- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029[4]
- Dublin Airport Local Area Plan[5]
- Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2030[6]

In addition, the following guidelines were considered when designing and undertaking desk study and field survey for amphibians:

- Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (herein referred to as 'the EPA Guidelines')[7]
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects - Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)[8]
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment[9]
- Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (Version 1.2, April 2022)[10]

[1] The Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (collectively referred to as the 'Wildlife Acts').
[2] King, J.L., Marnell, F., Kingston, N., Rosell, R., Boylan, P., Caffrey, J.M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Gargan, P.G., Kelly, F.L., O'Grady, M.F., Poole, R., Roche, W.K. and Cassidy, D. (2011). Ireland Red List No. 5: Amphibians, Reptiles and Freshwater Fish. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.
[3] https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-plan
[4] https://www.fingal.ie/development-plan
[5] https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2020-01/dublin-airport-lap-2020.pdf
[6] https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2023-12/Fingal%20Biodiversity%20Action%20Plan%202023-2030.pdf
[7] https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/guidelines-on-the-information-to-be-contained-in-environmental-impact-assessment-reports-eiar.php
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/EIA_guidance_EIA_report_final.pdf
[9] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/53aee9-guidelines-for-planning-authorities-and-an-bord-pleanala-on-carrying/
[10] https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ECIA-Guidelines-2018-Terrestrial-Freshwater-Coastal-and-Marine-V1.2-April-22-Compressed.pdf

3. Methods

3.1 Desk Study

A desk study was carried out to identify nature conservation designations for which amphibians are a qualifying feature and to search for records of these species in proximity to Dublin Airport.

A stratified approach was taken when defining the desk study area, which sought to identify:

- International nature conservation designations within 15km
- National statutory and non-statutory designated sites within 2km
- Records of amphibians within 2km

In addition, as part of the desk study, the results of previous daa commissioned surveys for amphibians in the vicinity of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary were also reviewed.

The desk study was carried out using the data sources detailed in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Desk Study Data Sources

Data Source	Date Accessed	Data Obtained
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Maps online tool (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/)	01 July 2026	• Locations of internationally designated sites within 15km of Dublin Airport. • National statutory designated sites within 2km of Dublin Airport.
National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website (www.npws.ie)	01 July 2026	• Details on relevant international and national statutory and non-statutory designations.
National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) (maps.biodiversityireland.ie)	15 July 2024	• Records of amphibian species within 2km of Dublin Airport.
The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (Article 17 Report) (https://www.npws.ie/publications/article-17-reports/article-17-reports-2019)	01 July 2026	• Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland.
Red List for Amphibians (King *et al* 2011)	01 July 2026	• Information on amphibian species.
Pre-construction amphibian survey report for North Runway (10L/28R) (RPS, 2016)	01 July 2026	• Results of previous amphibian surveys carried out at Dublin Airport.
Dublin Airport Local Area Plan and Appendix 2: Fingal Development Plan 2020-2026 Objectives relating to Dublin Airport (https://www.fingal.ie/dublin-airport-local-area-plan-2020)	01 July 2026	• Local planning policies relevant to the Proposed Order.
Google Maps (https://www.google.com/maps/) Tailte Éireann 1:25,000 maps and aerial photography (https://osi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bc56a1cf08844a2aa2609aa92e89497e)	01 July 2026	• Information on habitats and habitat connections (based on aerial images) relevant to planning policy and assessment of potential effects on amphibians.

3.2 Field Survey

All field surveys were carried out by experienced AECOM ecologists (see Section 1.2) and had regard for relevant guidance including, but not limited to, the National Road Authority's (NRA) (now known as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)) *Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes*[11].

[11] NRA (2009). Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes. National Roads Authority, Ireland.

In the absence of similar specific guidance for smooth newts, surveys for this species followed an adapted version of the United Kingdom (UK) published guidelines for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*[12,13] .

The scope of field survey was determined based on an understanding of the habitats, especially the presence of potentially suitable waterbodies, in the vicinity of the Dublin Airport Site, informed by preliminary walkover surveys and a review of available aerial imagery and OSi maps. To aid survey design, reporting and assessment across a large area, the Dublin Airport Site Boundary was demarcated into numbered Survey Locations (SL) where survey efforts were focussed, additionally three survey locations referred to as SP04, SP07, and SP09 were retained as survey areas from historic surveys for consistency these are presented on Figure 1.

Field surveys in 2024 were carried out within all accessible and visible lands with potential to be used by amphibians within 50m of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary and an extended survey area around SL9 as displayed in Figure 1. The main areas where surveys were carried out between 2019 to 2023 are displayed in Figure 2, which includes three survey locations referred to as SP04, SP07, and SP09 and drainage ditches in the wider area.

3.2.1 Habitat Suitability Assessment

Having regard for the NRA (2009) and UK published guidelines for great crested newts[12],[13] an assessment of the suitability of habitats within the vicinity of the Dublin Airport to support smooth newt and common frog was carried out 20 February 2019, 11 March, 23 June and 24 June 2020, and 09 May 2023. Habitat suitability for amphibians within 50m of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary around the Cuckoo Stream was reassessed 20 May 2024, 23 May 2024, and 27 May 2024.

Based on the NRA (2009) guidance, common frog can be found in a wide range of habitats and can breed in wet ditches, slow-flowing parts of a river, and ponds. Smooth newt prefers ponds and wet ditches with a diversity of submerged and emergent vegetation. Deep, flowing, or heavily shaded waterbodies are less preferred by smooth newt.

Features known to be positively or negatively associated with amphibians were also considered, such as aquatic vegetation cover, proportion of broadleaved vegetation cover (in which smooth newts lay their eggs), fish and waterfowl presence (both of which predate newts), and frog presence (upon which smooth newt prey).

3.2.2 Smooth Newt

Specific surveys for smooth newt were carried out following the NRA (2009) guidelines in areas with potential aquatic breeding habitat as detailed in Table 3-2. These surveys involved torchlight inspections and egg searches on the survey dates in Table 3-2.

Surveys were carried out at night and involved using a torch to search for smooth newt adults, juveniles, and eggs within the water. These surveys were carried out in suitable conditions for the visual identification of newts (after sunset, temperature higher than 5°C, light winds and no persistent or heavy rain).

[12] English Nature (2001). Great crested newt mitigation guidelines.

[13] Natural England (2015). Great crested newts: surveys and mitigation for development projects. Standing advice for local planning authorities who need to assess the impacts of development on great crested newts. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-advice-for-making-planning-decisions

Table 3-2 Smooth Newt Torching Survey Dates and Locations

Survey Date	Potential Newt Breeding Habitat	Survey Locations
23 May 2019	Wet ditches	• SL4
30 May 2019	Wet ditches	• SL4
25 March 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL4 • SL9 • SP09 • Ditches approximately 160m west of SL12
30 March 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL2 and ditches approximately 150m west • Ditches approximately 450m south of SL12
08 April 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL2 and ditches approximately 150m west • Ditches approximately 450m south of SL12
19 April 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL4 • SL9 • SP09 • Ditches approximately 160m west of SL2
04 May 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL4 • SL9 • SP09 • Ditches approximately 160m west of SL12
12 May 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL2 and ditches approximately 150m west • Ditches approximately 450m south of SL12
25 May 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL4 • SL9 • SP09 • Ditches approximately 160m west of SL12
24 June 2021	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL2 and ditches approximately 150m west • Ditches approximately 450m south of SL12
20 May 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL9
23 May 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL2
27 May 2024	Wet ditches	• SL4
30 May 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL2
31 May 2024	Cuckoo Stream and wet ditches	• SL4 • SL9
05 June 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL9
06 June 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL2
13 June 2024	Wet ditches	• SL4
19 June 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL9
20 June 2024	Wet ditches	• SL4
27 June 2024	Cuckoo Stream	• SL2

3.2.3 Common Frog

Potential aquatic breeding habitat was surveyed for common frog on 22 January, 20 February, 10 April 2019, 11 March 2020, 05 March and 09 March 2021, and 09 May 2023. Common frog surveys involved daylight searches for adults, tadpoles, and spawn within all watercourses in the survey area.

Any adult common frogs, tadpoles or spawn identified during the smooth newt torching surveys carried out in May 2019, March to June 2021, and May to June 2024 as per Table 3-2 were also recorded and included in this Technical Appendix.

3.3 Limitations

Desk study information is dependent on records having been submitted for the area of interest. As such, lack of records for particular species does not necessarily mean they are absent from the area of interest. Similarly, the presence of records for particular species does not automatically mean they still occur within the area of interest or are relevant.

The NBDC desk study record search was completed in 2024 and the baseline survey data used to inform the assessment has been gathered from a range of studies between 2019 and 2024, the main survey data were gathered to inform a previous Dublin Infrastructure Application Environmental Impact Assessment Report. These proposals incorporated the Dublin Airport Site Boundary but also included large scale construction activities which are not part of the Proposed Order submission, where survey effort was focussed.

CIEEM advises that survey data of between 12-18 months old is "*likely to be valid in most cases*" (CIEEM, 2019). Moreover, CIEEM also advises that survey data between 18 months and three years old may also still be valid if there have been no significant changes to the habitats present and the local distribution of species in the wider area is not known to have changed. These criteria are all met in the case of the Proposed Order, where there has been no significant change to baseline habitats between 2024 and 2025 (when update habitat surveys were conducted) and the distribution of important ecological features is not known to have changed locally. The data collected, which have informed this assessment, is therefore robust and valid, and there is no limitation to the reliability of the assessment presented in this document arising from the age of field survey data.

Field survey was partly limited by some areas of inaccessibility due to ongoing construction or other factors such as presence of aggressive cattle, land ownership, and safety issues. Cattle were often present in SL4 which limited the previous surveys that could be carried in this area. During a bat activity survey of SL4 on 15 June 2020 it was noted that the drainage ditches previously surveyed within this area were dredged and instream vegetation was removed. Therefore, these drainage ditches that previously had suitability for amphibians in 2019 were reassessed as having limited suitability in 2020. However, a section of the drainage ditch was reassessed as having smooth newt breeding suitability in 2024 and was accessible during the newt torching surveys. Therefore, the cattle in SL4 did not pose a limitation to the most recent newt surveys carried out in 2024.

4. Results

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 Desk Study

There are no designated sites for which amphibians are qualifying features within the desk study area described in Section 3.1.

4.1.2 Species Records

No smooth newts were recorded by surveys carried out for the Dublin Airport North Runway development carried out between April and May 2016. However, common frog spawn and tadpoles were identified during these surveys in 2016 by RPS within several ditches in the footprint of North Runway (10L/28R) confirming the presence of this species in this area prior to the construction of the North Runway (10L/28R)[14].

Records of smooth newt and common frog were returned by the NBDC database search within 2km of Dublin Airport. These records were mainly located in farmlands and residential areas surrounding Dublin Airport. The closest recent record of smooth newt was located approximately 2km north of Dublin Airport at the Ward River Valley Park in 2018.

4.2 Field Survey

4.2.1 Smooth Newt

No smooth newts were identified during the torching surveys.

Potential suitable habitat for breeding smooth newts identified in 2024 within 50m of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary are displayed in Figure 3. Several ditches that were previously suitable for smooth newt were no longer suitable in 2024 as they have either been removed due to construction, comprised very low water levels with only some small sections of shallow water, or were primarily shaded by vegetation. The majority of the drainage ditches located airside did not have standing water during the smooth newt surveys carried out in May and June 2024. The wet ditch along the eastern boundary of SL4 had suitability for breeding smooth newt as it typically had relatively slow water flow with instream broadleaved vegetation in 2024. The Cuckoo Stream had limited suitability for smooth newt due to poor water quality and limited instream broadleaved vegetation. However, it was surveyed for smooth newt on a precautionary basis.

4.2.2 Common Frog

Adult common frogs were recorded at SL4 in 2019 (Reference ‘CF01’). Common frog spawn were recorded airside approximately 450m south of SL12 in 2020 (Reference ‘CF02’). Common frog spawn and tadpoles were recorded airside in SL2 (Reference ‘CF03’) and in SP09 approximately 360m south-west of SL2 (Reference ‘CF04’) in 2021. These results are provided in Table 4-1 and displayed in Figure 4. The drainage ditches where CF02, CF03, and CF04 were recorded in 2020 and 2021 were primarily dry during the field surveys in May and June 2024.

Common frog are known to breed in a wide range of freshwater habitats and are widespread in Ireland. Therefore, given the presence of common frog during previous surveys in the vicinity of the Dublin Airport, all watercourses including ditches with shallow water within 50m of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary are displayed on Figure 3.

[14] RPS (2016). Pre-Construction Amphibian Survey daa North Runway. Unpublished report.

Table 4-1: Common Frog Survey Results

Reference	Dates(s)	Location (ITM)	Description	Photographs
CF01	30 May 2019	715317, 743759	Adult common frogs were recorded in a wet ditch by SL4 on 30 May 2019. This section of wet ditch runs along the R108 in an agricultural field grazed by cattle.	
CF02	11 March 2020	713707, 742533	Frog spawn was recorded in a wet drainage ditch located airside approximately 450m south of SL12 on 11 March 2020. There was one frog spawn clump that was approximately 40x20cm in area.	
CF03	09 March 2021, 08 April 2021	717239, 742509	Frog spawn was recorded in a wet drainage ditch located airside in SL2 on 09 March 2021. There were eight frog spawn clumps present that were each approximately 20x10cm in area. Tadpoles were recorded in the same wet drainage ditch on 08 April 2021.	
CF04	25 March 2021, 19 April 2021	716632, 742263	Frog spawn was recorded in a wet drainage ditch on 25 March 2021 in SP09, which is located approximately 360m south-west of SL2. There was one frog spawn clump present that was approximately 30x30cm in area. Tadpoles were recorded in the same wet drainage ditch on 19 April 2021.	N/A

5. Summary

Although records of smooth newt within 2km of Dublin Airport were identified by the desk study, none were recorded during targeted field surveys for the Dublin Airport Site. There were no ponds with suitability for smooth newt identified in the vicinity of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary. However, the wet ditch along the eastern boundary of SL4 is considered to provide potentially suitable habitat for smooth newt as it has relatively slow flowing water and presence of instream broadleaved vegetation. Furthermore, although the Cuckoo Stream has low suitability for smooth newt it was also surveyed on a precautionary basis. Therefore, although the species was not found to be present by field surveys, the presence of potentially suitable habitat combined with desk study records nearby means that the potential presence of smooth newt cannot be completely excluded.

Common frogs were previously recorded in four locations during the field surveys in 2019 to 2021. The majority of these wet diches where common frogs were previously recorded in airside locations are either removed due to construction or are primarily dry with only some sections of shallow water. However, common frog can be found in a wide range of habitats so on a precautionary basis and based on the habitat suitability reassessment carried out in 2024, all watercourses including wet ditches with shallow water within 50m of the Dublin Airport Site Boundary and around the Cuckoo Stream were considered potentially suitable to support common frog. Therefore, given previous records of common frog and potentially suitable habitat present, common frog are likely present and potentially breed in the vicinity of the Dublin Airport Site, particularly along the wet ditch at the eastern boundary of SL4.

6. Figures