



An
Bord
Pleanála

Appropriate Assessment: Screening Determination

ABP-315838-23

Development	Application received under Section 4 of the Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022 for a designated development at Tarbert Power Station.
Location	In the townland of Tarbert Island, Co. Kerry
Applicant	SSE Generation Ireland Ltd.

1.0 Appropriate Assessment: Screening Determination

1.1. Stage 1, Article 6(3) of Habitats Directive

In accordance with s.6(1) of the Act of 2022 and Article 9(1)(d) of the 2022 regulations, the Board is required to issue a Screening Determination under article 42 of Part 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) regulations 2011.

Article 42(1) of the 2011 regulations states that screening of a plan or project which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site. In accordance with subsection (6), an Appropriate Assessment is required where it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information that such plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

1.2. Description of the site and designated development

The designated development is located on Tarbert Island, Co. Kerry on the southern shores of the Shannon Estuary and within the existing Tarbert 650MW power station complex, which is owned by SSE Generation Ireland Ltd. The main development area is located on the western side of the overall power station site.

The designated development generally comprises the provision of three open cycle gas turbine units, each with 50MW capacity running on distillate fuel, and ancillary infrastructure and development. The units, with a total combined capacity of 150MW, will operate as a last-resort / emergency generating plant with a maximum running time of 500 hours per annum. Operations will be subject to the terms of an IE licence. The operational life of the designated development is expected to be up to five years and decommissioning is expected to take place in 2027 - 2028. I refer to the detailed description of the development set out in section 3.0 of the Environmental Report accompanying the application.

The designated development is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of any European Site. The site is not in itself located within a designated Natura 2000 Site, but is located adjacent to:

- Lower River Shannon candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) (Site code 002165) and
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site code 004077).

European sites in the wider area include:

- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (code: 004161) (c. 7km southeast).
- Moanveanlagh Bog cSAC (Code 002351) (c. 14km south) and

The conservation objectives for these European site are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

1.3. Screening

1.3.1 Documentation

The application is accompanied by an AA Screening Report, a Natura Impact Statement, as well as an Environmental Report and various supporting studies and reports. Having reviewed the Stage 1 Screening Assessment and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it was prepared by suitably qualified and experienced professionals, provides adequate information in respect of baseline conditions, clearly identifies the potential impacts, and uses best scientific information and knowledge to identify potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence. I am satisfied that the information provided is sufficient to allow the Board to make a determination in accordance with Article 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

1.3.2 Impact Mechanisms

The applicant's Screening Assessment identifies the following sources / mechanisms for potential significant effects on European Sites. In the context of the designated development, I consider the nature and scope of the identified sources and mechanisms to be reasonable.

Impact	Phase
Loss of functionally linked habitat	– Construction / decommissioning.
Waterborne pollution of qualifying, supporting or functionally linked habitat(s), or of qi / sci or supporting species;	– Construction / decommissioning. – Operation
Airborne pollution of qualifying, supporting or functionally linked habitat(s), or of qi / sci or supporting species; ¹	– Construction / decommissioning. – Operation
Changes to groundwater flows or volume	– Construction / decommissioning.
Disturbance of qi / sci species	– Construction / decommissioning. – Operation

¹ Based on a 15km search area in accordance with guidance for industrial air emissions sources published by the UK Environment Agency (EA) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-emissions-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit#screen-out-pecs-from-detailed-modelling>).

Injury or mortality of qi / sci species	– Construction / decommissioning
Barriers to or displacement of qi / sci or supporting species	– Construction / decommissioning
Spread of invasive non-native species	– Construction / decommissioning

1.3.3 Relevant European Sites

Based on the identified impact mechanisms, the applicant's Screening Assessment identifies the potential zone of influence of the designated development and concludes that significant effects on the following European Sites cannot be excluded:

- Lower River Shannon cSAC (code 002165)
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (code 004077).
- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (code 004161)
- Moanveanlagh Bog cSAC (code 002351)

The table below summarises the potential for the designated development to impact on the conservation objectives of the identified European Sites, in the context of the nature of the QI's/SCI's of the sites, separation from the designated development and the nature of the potential impact during either construction or operation.

Site code	European Site	Separation Distance	Potential Impact	Screen in / out
002165	Lower River Shannon cSAC	Adjacent	Waterborne pollution; Airborne pollution; Changes to groundwater; Disturbance; Injury or mortality; Barriers / displacement, Spread of invasive species	In
004077	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	Adjacent	Loss of functionally linked habitat; Waterborne pollution; Airborne pollution; Changes to groundwater;	In

			Disturbance; Barriers / displacement, Spread of invasive species.	
004161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA	c.7km southeast	Airborne pollution	In
002351	Moanveanlagh Bog cSAC	c. 14km south	Airborne pollution	In

Having regard to their proximity to the designated development site and the potential for emissions during both the construction and operational phases of the development, the European Sites identified by the applicants and listed above are considered relevant to include for the purposes of Stage 2 appropriate assessment on the basis of likely significant effects.

Given the extent of the zone of influence of the designated development, the only conservation features that have potential pathways for significant effects are QIs and SCIs for which these sites have been designated. There are no potential pathways for significant effects on conservation features of other European sites.

1.4. In-Combination Effects

I note the following existing, permitted or proposed developments in the surrounding area which have potential to act in-combination with the proposed development:

- Continued operation of Tarbert oil fired power plant and Moneypoint coal fired power plant.
- ABP-311233-21: Proposed LNG terminal and 600MW power plant at of Kilcolgan Lower and Ralappane, Ballylongford, Co. Kerry approx. 4.5km west of the site. Current application subject to EIA and AA.
- ABP-315836-23: The temporary emergency electricity generation proposed at the ESB site at Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly, designated under the Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022.

A ten-year permission was granted for a battery storage facility within the Tarbert generating facility under PA ref. 18/392. As that facility occupies the same site as the Designated Development they are mutually exclusive developments, and cannot have in-combination effects.

The applicant's Screening Report states that in respect of all impacts which have been screened into Appropriate Assessment, potential in-combination effects with other projects or plans will be considered as part of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. This is considered reasonable. The Natura Impact Statement accompanying the application identifies the following developments at Kilpaddoge approx. 1.7km west of the site:

- PA ref. 13/1318: An electricity peaking plant, amended by PA ref. 20/850.
- PA ref. 19/115: A grid stabilisation facility adjacent to PA ref. 13/138.
- PA ref. 21/549: A high inertia synchronous compensator, battery storage compound and associated works on the site of 19/115.
- PA ref. 18/878: 10-year permission for a Battery Energy Storage Project.

1.5. Conclusion and Recommendation

On the basis of the information on file, including the AA Screening Report and supporting information, it is recommended that the Board make a Screening Determination as follows:

In accordance with Article 42(6) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, on the basis of the information on file, including the AA Screening Report and supporting information, and having regard to:

- the nature and scale of the designated development,
- the close proximity between the development and European sites and the potential for emissions during both the construction and operational phases of the development,
- the potential for in-combination effects with the other energy infrastructure development in the area,

it is concluded that the designated development comprising an emergency electricity generation development at Tarbert Power Station, Tarbert Island, Co.

Kerry, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the following European Sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives:

- Lower River Shannon cSAC (site code 002165),
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (site code 004077),
- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (site code 004161), and;
- Moanveanlagh Bog cSAC (site code 002351).

An appropriate assessment is, therefore, required to determine if adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of the above listed sites.

The potential for significant effects on the conservation objectives of other European Sites outside of the zone of influence can be screened out with confidence because of the separation distances and the lack of substantive ecological linkages or pathways between the proposed works and other European sites. In reaching the conclusion of the screening assessment, no account was taken of measures intended to avoid or reduce the potentially harmful effects of the project on any European Site.

Conor McGrath

SPI

Appendix 1: Conservation Objectives

Lower River Shannon cSAC	
Interest	Conservation Objective
1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1095 Sea Lamprey	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1096 Brook Lamprey	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1099 River Lamprey	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1106 Atlantic Salmon (fresh water)	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1110 Sandbanks slightly covered by seawater all the time	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1130 Estuaries	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1170 Reefs	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1150 *Coastal lagoons	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1160 Large shallow inlets and bays	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of Atlantic and Baltic coasts	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1310 Salicornia and annuals colonising mud & sand	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1410 Mediterranean salt meadows	Restore the favourable conservation condition
3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soil	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
91E0 *Alluvial forests	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1349 Bottlenose Dolphin	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1355 Otter	Restore the favourable conservation condition

River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	
Interest	Conservation Objective
A017 Cormorant	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
A052 Teal	
A054 Pintail	
A062 Scaup	
A050 Wigeon	
A056 Shoveler	
A048 Shelduck	
A137 Ringed Plover	
A140 Golden Plover	
A141 Grey Plover	
A149 Dunlin	
A156 Black-tailed Godwit	
A157 Bar-tailed Godwit	
A160 Curlew	
A162 Redshank	
A164 Greenshank	
A142 Lapwing	
A046 Light-bellied Brent Goose	
A038 Whooper Swan	
A179 Black-headed Gull	
Habitat	
Wetland and Waterbirds	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds using it.

Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA

Interest	Conservation Objective
A082 Hen Harrier	Maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition.

Moanveanlagh Bog SAC

Interest	Conservation Objective
7110 Active raised bogs	To restore the favourable conservation condition
7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Long-term aim is to re-establish peat-forming capability; therefore, the objective is inherently linked to that of Active raised bogs
7150 Depressions on peat substrates of Rhynchosporion	A separate conservation objective has not been set