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## PLANNING REPORT

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<b>Project Title:</b>	Substitute Consent Application for retention of storage shed
<b>Site Address:</b>	Bunowen, Ballyconneely, Co. Galway
<b>Applicant:</b>	Terri Conroy
<b>OMC Project No:</b>	2713
<b>Document Issue Date:</b>	June 2025
<b>Prepared By:</b>	OMC Group

**Contents:**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Location and Site Description
3.0	Description of Development
4.0	Planning History
5.0	Planning Policy
6.0	Appropriate Assessment
7.0	Remedial Natura Impact Assessment
8.0	Exceptional Circumstances under Section 177K(1J)
9.0	Conclusion

## 1.0 Introduction

On behalf of our client, Mrs. Terri Conroy (the applicant), we are applying for substitute consent to An Coimisiún Pleanála for the retention of her shed at Bunowen Beg, Ballyconneely Co. Galway (H71 AE40).

The applicant has undergone the pre-application consultation for the substitute consent application pursuant to Section 177e(1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (ACP Ref. No. 321340-24), which was concluded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2025.

The current application for substitute consent has been lodged on the basis of the advice given during the pre-application consultation phase.

## 2.0 Location and Site Description

The existing dwelling house and storage shed are located on a local road at Bunowen Beg to the south west of Ballyconneely (see Figure 1 Site Location). The site is irregular in shape with an area of 0.45 Ha. The shed is located to the south of the existing dwelling within the site boundaries. The site benefits from mature landscaping and is well screened from the public road. There are no other developments in the immediate vicinity of the site.



**Figure 1: Site Location (approximate site boundaries outlined in red) (Source; Bing Maps)**



### 3.0 Description of Development

The storage shed as constructed has an approximate floor area of 40 sqm and a ridge height of 4.6m. Construction was commenced at the site by the applicant and her husband in 2016. The structure is circular in shape and constructed from natural materials (clay, wattle, timber, stone, sheep's wool, and lime mortar) with a green roof. Unwanted materials from other building projects such as doors, windows and floor boards were used in the building. The shed is used for storage purposes associated with the house and garden and is located a short distance south of the house. The applicants have submitted a detailed description of how the shed was constructed which can be found in Appendix A.



**Figure 2: Shed as constructed**

### 4.0 Planning History

Pl. Ref. 66577 was a grant of permission at the site for a dwelling and septic tank.

There have been two subsequent planning applications at the site by Terri Conroy, as follows;

- Pl. Ref. 23/60715 was an application at the site by Terri Conroy to retain existing shed on revised site boundaries lodged on the 29/06/2023. The application was validated by Galway County Council (GCC) on 05/07/2023. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) was submitted as part of the planning application. A subsequent letter (see Appendix B) on the 18/08/2023 stated that

GCC were invalidating the planning application stating that GCC could not consider the application as;

*“if an application for permission had been made in respect of the development concerned before it was commenced the application would have required that one or more of the following was carried out: (a) an environmental impact assessment (b) a determination as to whether an environmental impact assessment is required or (c) an appropriate assessment. In the absence of satisfactory evidence to the contrary, the planning authority cannot be satisfied that the development to be retained, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or any other European site”*

- Pl. Ref. 24/60236 was a subsequent application at the site by Terri Conroy, submitted on 05/03/2024 for retention of existing storage shed on revised site boundaries. This allocation included an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report. This was initially validated on the 07/03/2024 and was then invalidated by GCC on the 26/04/2024 (see Appendix C) for the same reason as was given for the previous planning application at the site.

## **5.0 Planning Policy**

DM Standard 6 of the *Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028* states the following in relation to domestic garages (urban and rural);

- *“The design, form and materials should be ancillary to, and consistent with the main dwelling on site;*
- *Structures may be detached or connected to the dwelling but should be visually subservient in terms of size, scale and bulk;*
- *Storage facilities should be used solely for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling and not for any commercial, manufacturing, industrial use or habitable space in the absence of prior planning consent for such use.”*

In terms of compliance with this DM Standard, it is submitted that the shed is subservient to the existing house in terms of size, scale and bulk and it is being used as a storage space incidental to the dwelling. It is not being used for any

industrial, manufacturing or commercial use and is not being used for habitable purposes.

While the design and materials used are unconventional and are not consistent with the dwelling house, it is submitted that the construction method and materials used are sustainable and have helped improve the biodiversity at the site through the installation of a green roof and the use of natural building materials which have been mainly recycled from previous uses (as detailed in the letter from the applicants in Appendix A). The shed is located in a quiet rural area and is not visible from the public road and it is submitted that it is fully integrated into the rural landscape (see Figure 3). While the design and materials used are unconventional, it can be said that it is an attractive building in the rural landscape which integrates well.



**Figure 3: Shed when viewed from public road to south**

The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 also contains objectives in relation to the protection of European sites in Chapter 10 which have been considered in the rNIS submitted.



## 6.0 Appropriate Assessment

The eastern and southern sections of the site are located within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC. (see Figure 4). The storage shed is located within the SAC to the south of the house.



**Figure 4: Map showing extent of SAC (shaded red) within the applicant site (red line site boundary) (Source: Eplan Galway County Council)**

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) was carried out retrospectively by Ms. Marie Louise Heffernan CEnv, MIEEM, MSc. of Aster Environmental Consultants Ltd and submitted with both planning applications and is included in Appendix D. This report screens out the need for Appropriate Assessment and concludes that;

*“Having surveyed the site it was determined that no QI habitat or species for which the Slyne Head Peninsula was selected as a Special Area of Conservation was present on site pre development. The habitats present in the footprint of the development were exposed rock and wet grassland. Neither of these are habitats of conservation importance for which the site was selected. No species of conservation importance were identified as impacted on by this development. In addition, no pathways exist for indirect impacts (water pollution) in this case due to the lack of watercourses within the area. Therefore, this project is said to screen out for Appropriate Assessment.”*

An Ecological Assessment was also submitted as part of the 2024 planning application, carried out by Ciara Morrin, BSc, NUIG (See Appendix E). This report concludes that;

*“Although the development lies within the SAC, no habitats or species which represent the qualifying Interests of the protected site were located on site, therefore, no direct impacts occurred as a result of this development. Lack of hydrological connectivity to the qualifying interests of the site, in conjunction with the minimally invasive construction methods rules out indirect impacts on the SAC.*

*Following a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the development including a review of all relevant documentation and planning history at the site, there is no evidence to suggest that any adverse impacts on the conservation objectives of the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or the local environment occurred as a result of this development.”*

Even though both planning applications screened out the need for appropriate assessment, Galway County Council did not agree, and in invalidating both applications, determined that appropriate assessment was required.

Contact was made with Galway County Council shortly after the pre-application consultation meeting to obtain planners reports for both applications as they were restricted viewing on Eplan. We were told that we could not get the full planners report as there was no decision made on the file but could get the planners recommendations (see emails from Council in Appendix F).

Another email was sent in June 2025 again requesting the planners reports which were forthcoming on this occasion and changed to public viewing on Eplan. Both of these reports state

*“The site of the development works that have been carried out is within Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (002074). Taking into account the storage shed to be retained is within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC, the planning authority is of the opinion that the development has the potential to adversely affect the integrity and conservation objectives of the aforementioned protected European site (Slyne Head Peninsula SAC).*

*The Applicant has included an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report which states that no Qualifying Interest habitat or species for Slyne Head Peninsula SAC was present on site. The Screening Report also states that the habitats*

*present in the footprint of the development were exposed rock and grassland. However, the planning authority note that no scientific evidence has been provided to support this assumption. Following this, it is mentioned that no pathways exist for indirect impacts (water pollution) in this case due to the lack of watercourses in the area.*

*Site inspections carried out by the planning authority confirm that the storage shed is an unauthorised structure and has been placed on site without the benefit of planning permission. Some of the qualifying interests reproduced above are or may be sensitive to development at this location.*

*The planning authority note the Ecological Assessment provided<sup>1</sup> with the application details which states that all construction was completed by hand using only hand tools and natural or reclaimed materials, including clay, wattle, timber, stone, sheep's wool, and lime mortar. Insufficient evidence has been provided to substantiate construction methodologies and materials.*

*In the absence of satisfactory evidence to the contrary, the planning authority cannot be satisfied that the development to be retained, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on these or any other European site."*

It is therefore evident that rather than ask for Further Information to obtain more information on the construction stage and the construction methodologies used, which the applicant would have been more than willing to provide, Galway County Council decided to invalidate both planning applications, with no option to the applicant other than to apply for substitute consent.

## **7.0 Remedial Natura Impact Statement (rNIS)**

A remedial Natura Impact Statement (rNIS) has been submitted with this application, carried out by Ciara Morrin B.Sc (Hons) Marine Science University of Galway. Site surveys were carried out at the site on Wednesday 17th January 2024 and Friday 25th April 2025. The rNIS concludes that;

*"Although the development site lies within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [002074], the habitats on-site do not represent the Conservation Objectives of the SAC. Furthermore, the habitats which were present on-site pre-*

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<sup>1</sup> For Pl. Ref. 24/60236

*construction are not assessed to have represented the Conservation Objectives of the SAC. This conclusion has been deducted from walk-over surveys of the site in January 2024 and April 2025, as well as a review of aerial photography of the site, and photos taken immediately before, and during the initial stages of construction of the storage shed. Therefore, direct impacts can be ruled out.*

*The potential for indirect impacts on QI and SCI species of the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC has been assessed and due to the nature, size and scale of the completed works, as well as lack of hydrological connectivity to QI species and habitats listed in Table 2 above, impacts have been ruled out.*

*As assessed in Table 2, the works did not result in loss of any significant habitat for any Annex I or BoCCI red-listed bird species. The works did not have the potential to significantly interfere with the conservation status of any SCI of the Slyne Head To Ardmore Point Islands SPA [004159], the Connemara Bog Complex SPA [004181], Inishbofin, Omey Island and Turbot Island SPA [004231] or Cruagh Island SPA [004170].*

*Based on the findings of this report no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network, or general biodiversity have occurred at any geographical scale as a result of this development."*

No remedial measures are proposed as part of the rNIS.

## **8.0 Exceptional Circumstances under Section 177K(1J)**

The applicant has been asked by An Coimisiún Pleanála to clearly set out the exceptional circumstances for the substitute consent application under Section 177K (1J) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Exceptional circumstances are listed below with our response on behalf of the applicant;

- (a) whether regularisation of the development concerned would circumvent the purpose and objectives of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive or the Habitats Directive;*

Having regard to the characteristics of the proposed development and of the area there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, such as to require an environmental impact

assessment (EIA). It is submitted that the carrying out the development did not, therefore, circumvent the purpose and objectives of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.

As regards whether regularisation of the development concerned would circumvent the purpose and objectives of the Habitats Directive, a rNIS has been submitted with the application. This has concluded that there have been no adverse impacts on any European sites. Therefore, it is submitted that the development does not circumvent the purpose and objectives of the Habitats Directive.

*(b) whether the applicant had or could reasonably have had a belief that the development was not unauthorised;*

The applicants were genuinely not aware that the construction of the shed adjacent to their dwelling required planning permission and were not aware that they had constructed the shed on a European site. They only realised the seriousness of the situation once enforcement proceedings commenced.

*(c) whether the ability to carry out an assessment of the environmental impacts of the development for the purpose of an environmental impact assessment or an appropriate assessment and to provide for public participation in such an assessment has been substantially impaired;*

Given that the original AASR and EclA carried out at the site concluded that there were no adverse effects, and given the nature of the works carried out at the site, it is difficult to conclude that the ability to carry out an Appropriate Assessment could have been impaired. The public will have full ability to participate during the course of the application.

*(d) the actual or likely significant effects on the environment or adverse effects on the integrity of a European site resulting from the carrying out or continuation of the development;*

There are no likely significant effects on the environment or the integrity of a European site as a result of the continuation of the shed use at the site.

*(e) the extent to which significant effects on the environment or adverse effects on the integrity of a European site can be remediated;*



The rNIS submitted concludes that there have been no significant effects on the European site and that no remediation works are required.

*(f) whether the applicant has complied with previous planning permissions granted or has previously carried out an unauthorised development;*

The applicant, to my knowledge, has never carried out other unauthorised development.

*(g) such other matters as the Board considers relevant.*

We would like to point out that the development is small in scale and used ancillary to the applicant's dwelling at the site. The applicant is of the opinion that the shed was constructed at the site using traditional non-invasive methods of natural materials and that it adds to the biodiversity in the area more than a conventional concrete block shed would.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the applicants would like to rectify the planning status of the shed that they have built next to their home. In an attempt to do this, two applications were submitted to Galway County Council, both of which were invalidated as the Council were of the opinion that an Appropriate Assessment was required.

The construction process for the shed was non-invasive. Natural and recycled building materials were used and it is submitted that the shed integrates well into the rural landscape. The current application includes a rNIS which concludes that there have been no adverse impacts on any European sites as a result of the development and no remedial measures are proposed. We therefore respectfully request that the Coimisiún look upon the current application favourably and grant retention permission for the development.

**APPENDIX A**

Our house is small and during the summer it becomes taken over with plant material that I dry. I need a clean and dry environment for the plants to dry. My husband suggested he build me a natural, ecological shed to keep my herbs and paraphernalia in; a shed of **natural** materials as I was drying plants for herbal medicine. It never occurred to us that planning would be required for such a shed, here in the countryside, where many people have sheds for various reasons such as farming and horticulture.

Our garden had been planted up and had veg beds in it and there was not enough room to build a shed so my brother volunteered a spot in his field over the wall from us. It turns out, according to Anne Mooney (OMC), that the few metres over the wall was in a SAC area, whereas our own garden was not.

In 2016 I dug up the sod and we put it to one side to be placed on the roof later. (1) My husband built the shed over the next six/seven years, (it is still not finished as it is only one man working alone) learning skills as he went.

As the shed was being built we realised that it was a great resource for spillover from the house. I do dry my herbs there and I also keep my bee keeping equipment there - suits, wax, supers and frames. The lawn mower and other garden equipment is there along with garden furniture during winter. My husband also has a dedicated place for his tools too and he can paint in there if he is using oil paints because of the fumes, as our house is so small. My husband also made a feature wall so that we can film some of our YT videos there. (18)

My husband is a visual artist and he has always had a passion for sensitively built ecological buildings. He was one of the founding members of the **Terryland Forest Park** steering committee and was responsible for writing the arts brief for the project which initially included a green roofed arts centre. Due to this involvement, he had researched ecological building and building with low environmental impact. Building a shed for us gave him the opportunity to try his hand at low impact building. To him it was working as a sculptor. I was in complete agreement, as it saddens me to see huge lorry loads of concrete going up the roads.

My husband wanted the shed to look beautiful rather than be just a square of blocks and we were conscious of the carbon foot print; so rather than using concrete blocks and a cement foundation, he decided to build a round shed (2) using logs (3) and build a reciprocal-framed roof which would be very strong and give us ample space inside. A round shed with a grass roof (11) would blend into the landscape and nestle there, we thought. (18) Such a roof, we

hoped, would also provide extra habitat for plants to grow and for birds birds such as larks to nest and is in fact, doing just that.

Our ethos is to be mindful of the environment and our impact on it, which is how we live our lives; so as many materials as possible were reused, recycled or reclaimed. For example, the shed is insulated with raw sheeps' wool (6) from local farmers who cannot sell it due to it having no market value so they were glad to give it away. The windows were all recycled from the local window repair man who would have had to pay to send them to land fill.(13) Likewise the floor - this came from a builder friend who was renovating a tourist house and was asked to take up a *whole* floor with minor water damage in one little spot. (15) The floor is hardwood and would have been burned or dumped. It would have been such a waste. The front door was salvaged from a dumpster bin in Clifden - it had been a garden bench before my husband took it apart and made the door. (14)

Under the sod roof we used larch off cuts (9) which are waste from a saw mill and this was covered with some spare polytunnel plastic we had. We spread carpet which was being thrown away by a Clifden Hotel (10) and on the interior of the roof my husband made ceiling boards from old pallets - which again, were destined for burning or landfill. (8) The ceiling space was also insulated using raw sheeps wool. (7) So by building this shed we have to some extent, protected the air and the physical environment and we have not had to use any excess carbon based materials - concrete or cement.

We used Coillte logs and cut them down so that the damp would wick out of the building. (4)(5) These were covered with a lime plaster and then painted with a waterglass paint (16) which binds to the plaster making it water proof as the logs beneath can breathe. Before plastering, we collected discontinued oyster bags that were an environmental hazard to shore life and were often to be found dumped. (12)

As this shed was built completely by hand, it was easy to carry all the materials to the site, all of which came at different times due to when they were found or salvaged or donated. There was no machinery involved and there is no road to the shed, only a little garden path. There are no utilities either - no electricity or water.

Upon discovering that we should have made a planning application, I applied for exemption as this is a shed. We were turned down because, we discovered, we are in an SAC. We then applied for retention and included an environmental assessment conducted by Marie Louise Heffernan which concluded that there was no negative impact to the site due to the building of the shed. We were turned down again so re-applied with another ecological assessment by Ciara Morrin which gave the same conclusion. Whilst both Ms Heffernan and Ms Morrin concurred that there was no impact to flora or fauna

within this SAC both emphasised that damage would be done to the environment should the shed be demolished. There are birds and insects now using the sod roof as habitat which would be lost to them should the shed be demolished.

With regard to the SAC, two houses have been approved for planning just yards from me. They both submitted appropriate assessments that concluded, as ours did, that no negative impact to this part of the SAC has occurred. These are the planning application reference numbers 15784 and 21195.





1. Breaking the sod



2. Coillte log frame



3. Preparing branches



4. Laying log wall





5. Log wall



6. Sheep's wool insulation



7. Wool insulation on ceiling



8. Pallet wood ceiling





9. Larch offcuts on roof



10. Laying old carpet on roof





11. Placing turf back on roof



12. Attaching & plastering oyster bags



13. Repurposing windows



14. Door





15. Floor



16. Natural waterglass paint



17. View from road



18. Filming Youtube video against feature wall

**APPENDIX B**



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## Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

Terry Conroy  
c/o Enda O'Malley  
Unit 1 Bridge Street  
Clifden  
Co. Galway  
H71 A218

Dáta / Date: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**RE: PLANNING REFERENCE NO. 23-60715**

### A Chara

The planning authority under Part III, Section 34 (12) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) cannot consider the application in this instance.

The legislation under that Part and Section states, inter alia, the following:

The Planning Authority has decided that if an application for permission had been made in respect of the development concerned before it was commenced the application would have required that one or more than one of the following was carried out—

- (a) an environmental impact assessment,
- (b) a determination as to whether an environmental impact assessment is required, or
- (c) an appropriate assessment.

The subject site is located within Slyne Head Peninsula Special Area of Conservation (SAC Site Code 002074).

In the absence of satisfactory evidence to the contrary, the planning authority cannot be satisfied that the development to be retained, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or any other European site.

Please note that the fee paid and documents lodged will be returned to you in due course.

Mise le meas

  
for COUNTY SECRETARY



**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe**  
**Galway County Council**

Dáta / Date: 18/08/2023

Terry Conroy  
c/o Enda O'Malley Consulting Engineers  
Unit 1 Bridge Street,  
Clifden  
Co. Galway  
H71 A218

**Tag: Iarratas Pleanála Neamhbhailí.**

**Uimh. Tag.: 23/60715**

**Re: Invalid Planning Application. Ref. No: 23/60715**

A Chara,


Tá sé measta ag Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe go bhfuil an t-iarratas pleanála thuas neamhbhailí. Cuirim chugat leis seo doiciméid a lóisteáil tú ar an 29/06/2023. Tá socraithe déanta chun táillí a íocadh, a aisíoc leat in imeacht ama.

Tabhair faoi deara gur cheart iarratas nua pleanála in éindí leis an táille cuí a chuir isteach d'aon fhorbairtí eile beartaithe ar an suíomh seo.

Galway County Council have deemed the above planning application to be Invalid. I return herewith the documents lodged by you on 29/06/2023. Arrangements have been made to refund fees paid which you will receive in due course.

Please note that a new planning application together with the appropriate fee should be submitted for any further proposed developments on this site.

Mise, le meas,

  
a.s. RÚNAÍ CONTAE

**APPENDIX C**

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24/60236

## Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

26<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Terry Conroy**  
**c/o Enda O'Malley & Associates**  
**Unit 1 Bridge Street**  
**Clifden**  
**Co Galway.**  
**H71 A218**

**RE: PLANNING REFERENCE NO. 24/60236**

**A Chara,**

The planning authority under Part III, Section 34 (12) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) cannot consider the application in this instance.

The legislation under that Part and Section states, inter alia, the following:

A planning authority shall refuse to consider an application to retain unauthorised development of land where the authority decides that if an application for permission had been made in respect of the development concerned before it was commenced the application would have required that one or more than one of the following was carried out—

- (a) an environmental impact assessment,
- (b) an appropriate assessment.

The Planning Authority has decided that if an application for permission had been made in respect of the development concerned **before it was commenced** the application would have required that one or more than one of the following was carried out—

- (a) an environmental impact assessment,
- (b) an appropriate assessment.

The subject site is located within Slyne Head Peninsula Special Area of Conservation (SAC Site Code 002074).

In the absence of satisfactory evidence to the contrary, the planning authority cannot be satisfied that the development to be retained, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or any other European site.

Please note that the fee paid and documents lodged will be returned to you in due course.

**Mise le meas**

**for COUNTY SECRETARY**

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## Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

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Dáta / Date: 26/04/2024

**Tag: Iarratas Pleanála Neamhbhailí. Uimh. Tag.: 24/60236**  
**Re: Invalid Planning Application. Ref. No: 24/60236**

A Chara,

Tá sé measta ag Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe go bhfuil an t-iarratas pleanála thuas neamhbhailí mar ní féidir é a mheas sa chás seo. Cuirim chugat leis seo doiciméid a lóistéal tú ar an 05/03/2024. Tá socraithe déanta chun táillí a íocadh, a aisíoc leat in imeacht ama.

Galway County Council have deemed the above planning application to be Invalid as it cannot be considered in this instance. I return herewith the documents lodged by you on 05/03/2024. Arrangements have been made to refund fees paid which you will receive in due course.

Mise, le meas,

  
**do Eileen Keaveney,**  
**O.F. Pleanáil & Forbairt.**  
**A.O.Planning & Development.**

**APPENDIX D**





## Appropriate Assessment Screening

Terry Conroy

Ballyconneely, Co. Galway



Marie Louise Heffernan, CEnv, MIEEM, MSc.

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## **Qualifications and Experience**

This report was prepared and written by Marie Louise Heffernan. She has worked on Appropriate Assessments since 2009. Marie Louise holds an MSc in Environmental Science from TCD (1995), and is a chartered environmentalist with the Society of the Environment (UK) as well as a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Marie Louise worked for NPWS under contract from 1997-2007 surveying Natura 2000 sites, selecting areas for SPA designation, preparing Natura 2000 conservation plans. She has specialised in the Habitats Directive implementation and assessments and has trained over 600 professionals throughout Ireland and beyond in Appropriate Assessments. She has developed expertise also in breeding seabird ecology, fisheries and aquaculture. Through her company Aster Environmental Consultants her commercial work has extended to alternative energy installations, quarries, roads, bridges and strategic housing developments. Her clients to date have included Councils, IFI, NPWS, OPW, private companies, CIEEM and Engineers Ireland.

**Contents**

Contents .....	3
1.0 Introduction.....	4
2.0 Description of Development.....	5
3.0 Zone of influence and Natura 2000 Sites .....	5
4.0 Receiving Environment.....	11
5.0 Impact Prediction and Assessment.....	12
6.0 Conclusion Statement.....	16
7.0 References .....	16
Appendix 1: Natura 2000 - Site Synopsis .....	18

## 1.0 Introduction

Aster has been commissioned to carry out a AA Screening by Terry Conroy. The assessment will be conducted in accordance with Schedule 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Assessment of Plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites).

### 1.1 Site Survey

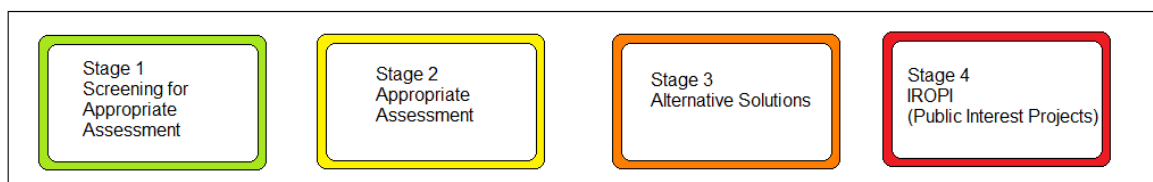
The site walkover survey was carried out in June 2023 with the purpose of surveying habitats on site (Fossit, 2000). A mammal survey was also carried out to identify dens which might be impacted on by construction and to discover if the site was free of invasive species.

### 1.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 sites are those designated under the terms of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, known as the 'Habitats Directive' and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds (codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended) commonly known as the 'Birds Directive'. There are two types of Natura 2000 site designation, the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Special Protection Area (SPA). SACs are designated for the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats of European importance under the Habitats Directive and SPAs for the conservation of bird species and habitats of European importance under the Birds Directive. These sites form part of 'Natura 2000' a network of protected areas throughout the European Union. Annex I of the Habitats Directive lists certain habitats that must be given protection. Certain habitats are deemed 'priority' and have greater protection. Irish habitats listed on Annex I include raised bogs, active blanket bogs, lagoons, turloughs, heaths, lakes and rivers. Annex II of the same directive lists species whose habitats must be protected and includes Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Otter, Salmon and White-clawed Crayfish. Annex I of the Birds Directive lists endangered and migratory species for which SPAs are required to be designated.

### 1.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment may be required under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites. The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government guidelines (DOELHG, 2009) indicates the European Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002) promoting a four-stage process to complete the AA, and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. The four stages are summarised diagrammatically below.



### 1.4 Scope

The aim of the screening exercise is to determine the potential for this project to impact on the conservation objectives and ecological integrity of Natura 2000 sites. This report has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission guidance document Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and the Department of the Environment's Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (Amended 2010).

Where significant or indeterminate effects on the conservation objectives and the general integrity of Natura 2000 sites are determined following the preliminary screening, further assessment under Article 6(3) is deemed necessary and the completion of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is recommended.

## 2.0 Description of Development



Map 1: Site Layout (Reproduced under OSI Licence number EN 0070910)

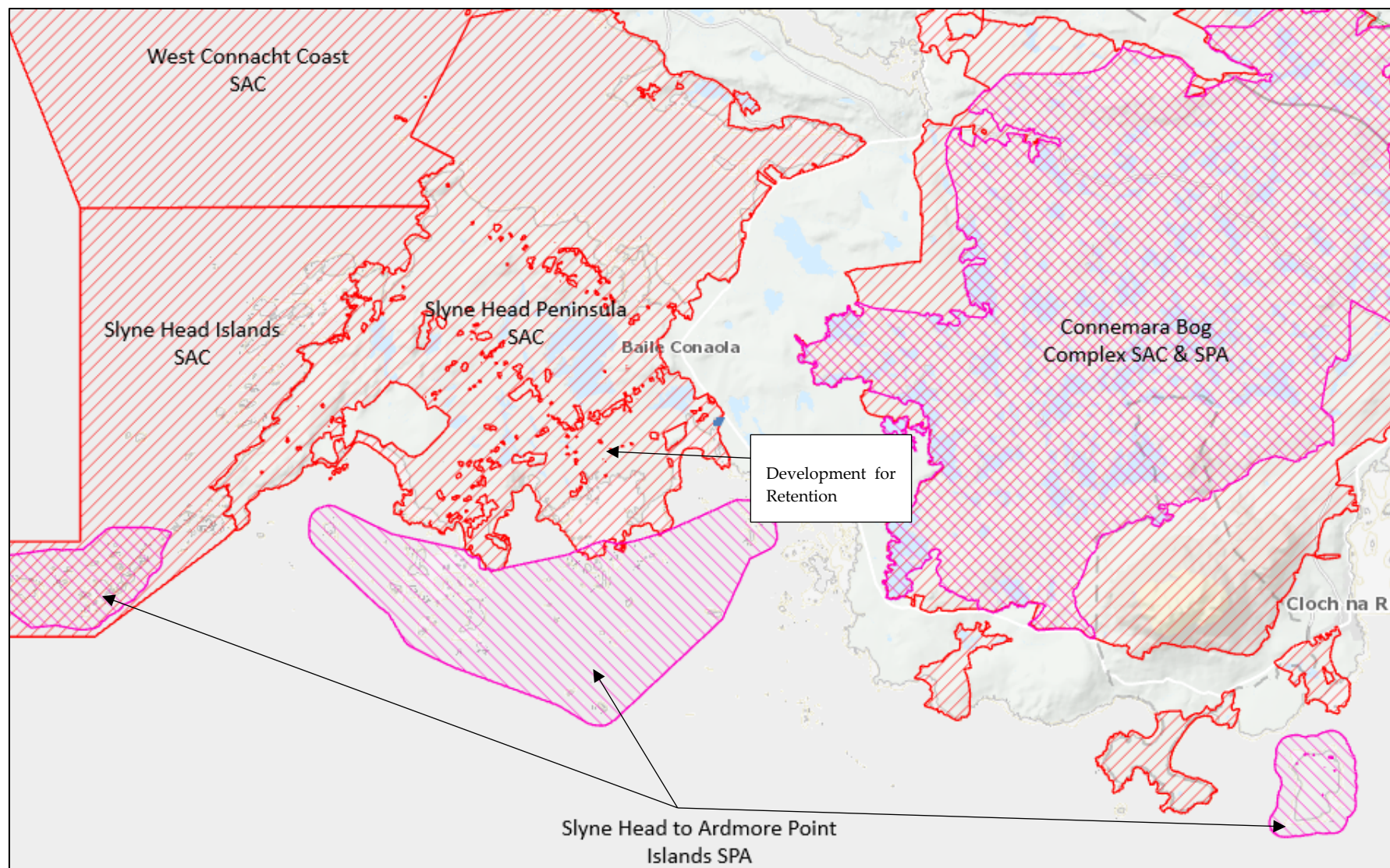
The project is a retention of a shed/storage space without plumbing or electricity adjacent to an existing house.

Stages that occurred to facilitate this development

1. Levelling site to commence construction
2. Building was by hand using wood and lime mortar

## 3.0 Zone of influence and Natura 2000 Sites

The proposed development site is located in the townland of Ballyconneely, Co. Galway. The site is within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC.



Map 2: Location of the Retention site relative to the Natura 2000 designations. (Reproduced under OSI Licence number EN 0070910)

### 3.1 Relationship to Designated Sites

Natura 2000 sites within 15 kilometres of the retention application were considered initially as per the NPWS guidance document. This Initial screening revealed that the following sites lie within 15km radius of the development:

Natura 2000 Site	Code	Distance
Slyne Head Peninsula SAC	002074	0.00km
Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands SPA	004159	1.2km
Connemara Bog Complex SPA	004181	1.9km
Connemara Bog Complex SAC	002034	1.9km
Murvey Machair SAC	002129	5.0km
West Connacht Coast SAC	002998	5.7km
Slyne Head Islands SAC	000328	6.0km
Twelve Bens Garraun Complex SAC	002031	7.8km
Dogs Bay SAC	001257	7.8km
Cregduff Lough SAC	001251	9.4km
Inishbofin, Omev Island and Inishturbot SPA	004231	9.8km
Kingstown Bay SAC	002265	10.3km
Rosroe Bog SAC	000324	11.9km
Barnahallia Lough SAC	002118	12.5km
Omev Island Machair SAC	001309	13.1km
Cruagh Island SPA	004170	14.2km

Table 1: Natura 2000 sites within 15km

#### *Zone of Influence*

According to the DEHLG 2009 guidelines “Although a distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans...[however] for projects, the distance could be much less than 15km, and in some cases less than 100m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis”

Thus the Zone of Influence requires to be defined for each project. A “zone of influence” is the difference between an activity's spatial footprint and the extent of the activity's effects on surrounding habitat and wildlife populations. Light, noise and hydrological connections are the major influencers in this regard.

The factors in defining the zone of influence above were as follows:

- The location of designated N2000 sites.
- The distance to which pollution generated could impact on downstream habitats.
- The extent of noise and light impacts on ecological receptors.

Given the type of project, the site being considered further is the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (site code 2074) (see Appendix 1)





Map 3: Location of the site relative to the Natura 2000 designations being considered further Shaded area is the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC

### 3.2 Description of the Natura 2000 Sites

The Habitats Directive states “Any plan or project not directly connected or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a *significant* effect thereon, either *individually* or *in combination* with other plans or projects, shall be subject to *appropriate assessment* of its implication for the site in view of the sites *conservation objectives* ...the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site...”

The conservation objectives form the basis of the Appropriate Assessment as it is against these objectives that the assessment is made.

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long - term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and



- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long - term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long - term basis.

### 3.2.1 Slyne Head Peninsula SAC

#### Conservation Objectives for Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (Site Code 002074)

Code	Qualifying Interest	Conservation Objectives
1150	Coastal lagoons	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1170	Reefs	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1220	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1330	Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> )	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1395	<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
1410	Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> )	Restore the favourable conservation condition
1833	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	Restore the favourable conservation condition
2120	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")	Restore the favourable conservation condition
21A0	Machairs (* in Ireland)	Restore the favourable conservation condition
3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains ( <i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i> )	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara spp.</i>	Maintain the favourable conservation condition
4030	European dry heaths	Maintain the favourable conservation condition

Table 2 Slyne Head Peninsula SAC Qualifying Interests – Habitats & Species

The conservation objectives above form the basis of this assessment. In relation to conservation condition the bar of “restore” is more difficult to achieve than “maintain” and so this will be considered should significant impacts be identified in relation to the habitats or species for which the site is selected.

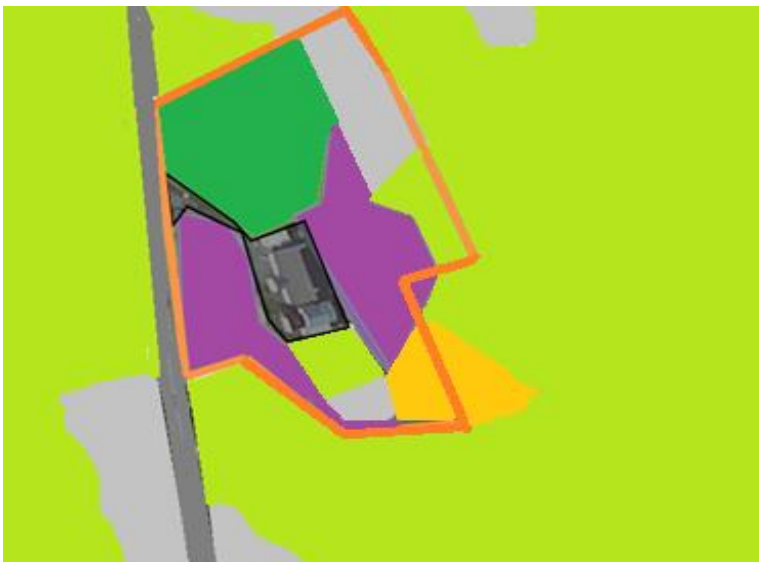
## 4.0 Receiving Environment

Receiving environment can be broken down into several different elements

1. Habitats
2. Hydrology
3. Invasive species

### 4.1 Habitats

The habitats found on site are classified based on walkover surveys. No specific flora or fauna surveys were undertaken at this site. The habitats recorded are classified in accordance with 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000), which classifies habitats based on the vegetation present and management history.



**Map 4 : Gross Habitat Map (Pre construction)**

GS4 Wet Grassland (bright green)

This area was surveyed in June and contained abundant Rushes (*Juncus*) and Yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudocorus*). Also present were Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Buttercup (*Ranunculus*), Self heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Sedge (*Carex* spp), White clover (*Trifolium repens*) and Bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*).

Reed and large sedge swamps FS1 (Orange)

Most reed and large sedge swamps are overwhelmingly dominated by one or a small number of species, as in the case of reedbeds. In this case it mainly consists of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)

Horticultural land BC2 (Dark Green)

This category includes areas of land that are cultivated and managed for the production of vegetables, fruit crops, culinary or aromatic herbs, flowers and other ornamental plants as well as polythene tunnels

#### ER1 Exposed siliceous rock (Grey)

The granite outcrops have small pockets of soil with the following recorded in small amounts Hawksweed (*Hieracium*), Sheeps bit (*Jasione montana*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), Bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).

#### BL3 Buildings and Roads (Transparent Black outline)

The buildings and access roads are highlighted. The new storage shed is not included as it is a pre construction map

#### WS2 Immature woodland Trees /scrub (purple)

This mainly consists of willow (*Salix*) and are interperesed with some pockets of wet grassland.

The above map show the habitat as it was pre construction

Note the construction impacted on Exposed Rock habitat and Wet Grassland only.

## 4.2 Hydrology

Hydrology plays a critical role in appropriate assessment and is often a key element of assessments. Indirect impacts of a project are often the result of water pollution (sediments and hydrocarbons) leaving the site and travelling downstream to a protected area.



Map 5: EPA map showing water flow direction and Natura 2000 site. T

There are no watercourses in the area close to the retention development site.

## 5.0 Impact Prediction and Assessment



The project description combined with an appreciation of the ecology of the habitats and species listed under the conservation objectives with result in an impact assessment.

### 5.1 Proximity and relevance of qualifying interests to the development Slyne Head Peninsula SAC

Code	Qualifying Interest	Proximity/Relevance
1150	Coastal lagoons	The nearest Coast Lagoon is 1km northwest of the site – L. Ballyconneely (Code: IL067)
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	2.km to nearest area north of the site as mapped by NPWS
1170	Reefs	South 600m
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	1.1km southeast of the development site
1220	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	1.1 km southeast of the development site
1330	Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> )	2.2km northeast of the development site, and 1.8km southwest of the site to <i>potential</i> Atlantic Salt Meadows
1395	<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>	2.2km northwest of the development site to the nearest area
1410	Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> )	1.1km SE the development site
1833	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	770 m northwest to nearest site – Lough Anaserd
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	1.3km south east of the development –
2120	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")	1.3km southeast of the development site –
21A0	Machairs (* in Ireland)	1.1km southwest of the development site
3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains ( <i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i> )	770 northwest of the development site – Lough Anaserd

Table 3: Proximity Slyne Head Peninsula SAC qualifying interests

3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara spp.</i>	1.2km southwest of the development site to the nearest area
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4030	European dry heaths	<i>The area was surveyed in June 2023 and this habitat was absent for the footprint of the development and surrounding area</i>
5130	<i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	<i>The area was surveyed in June 2023 and this habitat was absent for the footprint of the development and surrounding area</i>
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (important orchid sites)	<i>The area was surveyed in June 2023 and this habitat was absent for the footprint of the development and surrounding area</i>  <i>The area is not calcareous.</i>
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils	<i>The area was surveyed in June 2023 and this habitat was absent for the footprint of the development and surrounding area. No molinia was recorded.</i>
6510	Lowland hay meadows ( <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> )	<i>The area was surveyed in June 2023 . The area was considered too wet generally for Hay meadows classification with a high percentage of Yellow flag and rushes and fields grading to freshwater marsh with reeds</i>
7230	Alkaline fens	<i>Not mapped by NPWS. Not present in the footprint of development</i>

Table 3: Proximity Slyne Head Peninsula SAC qualifying interests

## 5.2 Direct and Indirect Impacts

Having outlined the project and the details of the Natura 2000 sites, an assessment for possible impacts can be carried out. following the document; “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites- Methodology guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission, 2002”.

The impact of the project on the conservation objectives of the selected natura 2000 site must be examined in terms of both direct and indirect impact.

The storage shed was built using lime mortar and wood. No machines were used.

It has no plumbing or electricity. No additional people using this shed is envisaged

**Direct impacts** are loss of habitats or loss of nesting/den sites. For example if the main habitat on site was heath and the footprint building resulted in loss of heath habitat that would fall into this category.

**Indirect impacts** Examples of Indirect impacts are water pollution, light pollution or noise pollution

The main impacts considered were as follows

### 1. Direct impacts

This could potentially have resulted in a loss of QI habitats or species. However survey revealed that through examination of aerial photographs and surveying adjacent habitats that no habitats or species for which the Slyne Head peninsula was selected as an SAC for were likely to have been on site pre building. No impact is identified in this regard.

## 2. Indirect Impacts

Potential indirect impacts are (in this case) building materials or disturbed sediments ending up in watercourses and made their way to sensitive protected lakes or other aquatic environments. However having examined the EPA hydrology maps. No conduit for such pollution exists and therefore no impact was identified as possible.

## 3. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative Impacts consist of both plans and projects. The most relevant plan is the Galway County Development Plan.

<b>NHB 4</b>	<b>Ecological Appraisal of Biodiversity</b>
Ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites. Where appropriate require an ecological appraisal, for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European Sites, or a proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.	
<b>NHB 5</b>	<b>Ecological Connectivity and Corridors</b>
Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity in non-designated sites, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife areas where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.	
<b>NHB 6</b>	<b>Implementation of Plans and Strategies</b>
Support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Heritage Plan 2030, the National Biodiversity Plan, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy and any such plans and strategies during the lifetime of this plan.	

Projects come in a variety of shapes and types

Activities	Impacts on the environment
Agriculture – Other activities	Agricultural practices can increase fine sediment and nutrient load to the bay and lake. Activities with the potential to impact include <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liming of Land</li> <li>2. Intensification of agriculture</li> <li>3. Pesticides, herbicides and fertiliser use</li> </ol>
Point Discharges	Point sources discharging nutrients, such as wastewater treatment plants, can contribute very significant nutrient and organic loads to the bay.
Roadworks	Ongoing roadworks, road improvements, road widening and associated drainage and culvert replacement have the ability to impact on watercourses including sediment loading and risk of fuel spillage.
Housing developments	There is a land use pattern in Galway of dispersed housing, many with their own abstraction (rivers, lakes and wells) and sewage treatment. This has the potential to be a negative impact on the catchment.

In conclusion there are many other plans and projects within the catchment which have the possibility of negatively impacting on water quality and associated habitats and species. These include agriculture, point discharges, road works and housing developments. Overall the County development Plan is assessed as neutral impact. This project is expected to have no significant impact on the Natura 2000 network. Thus, no cumulative impact is predicted.

## 6.0 Conclusion Statement

Having surveyed the site it was determined that no QI habitat or species for which the Slyne Head Peninsula was selected as a Special Area of Conservation was present on site pre development. The habitats present in the footprint of the development were exposed rock and wet grassland. Neither of these are habitats of conservation importance for which the site was selected. No species of conservation importance were identified as impacted on by this development. In addition no pathways exist for indirect impacts (water pollution) in this case due to the lack of watercourses within the area. Therefore this project is said to screen out for Appropriate Assessment.

## 7.0 References

- European Commission 2021 Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- European Commission 2000 managing Natura 2000 sites the provisions of Article 6 of the habitats directive 92 / 43 / EEC stop office for official publications for the European Communities Luxembourg
- European Commission 2002 assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting that or 2000 sites methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 63 and 64 of the habitats directive 92 / 43 / EEC office for official publications for the European Communities Luxembourg



European Commission 2006 nature and biodiversity cases ruling of the European Court of Justice office for the official publications for the European Communities Luxembourg

European Commission 2007 guidance document on article 64 of the habitats directive 93/42 EEC clarification of the concepts of alternative solutions imperative reasons of overriding public interest compensatory measures overall coherence and the opinion of commission

Fossit, J. A. 2000. *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council.

NPWS, 2022 (28/02/2022). Natura 2000 Form Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (site code 002074)

NPWS, 2022 (28/02/2022). Site Synopsis Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (site code 002074)

NPWS, 2022 (28/02/2022). Conservation Objectives Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (site code 002074)

Wexford, Ireland

Websites:

[www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) visited 28/02/2022

<https://eunis.eea.europa.eu/habitats/10047>

## Appendix 1: Natura 2000 - Site Synopsis

**SITE NAME: SLYNE HEAD PENINSULA**

**SITE CODE: 002074**

This site comprises the peninsula west of Ballyconneely, Co. Galway. It extends northwards to Errislannan Point to include the shallow waters of Mannin Bay. The peninsula is low-lying and undulating, reaching a maximum height of only 64 m (Doon Hill). The underlying rock is predominantly gneiss, except for schist along the northern shores of Mannin Bay, a granite ridge along the western edge of the peninsula and a conspicuous basalt exposure which forms Doon Hill. The peninsula is fringed with rocky shores and sandy beaches, with some extensive areas of machair and several brackish lakes and lagoons. Inland, the site is a maze of small fields, supporting a mosaic of habitats dominated by grassland and heath, interspersed with numerous lakes and associated swamp, marsh and fen. An important feature of the site is the influence of windblown calcareous sand on these habitats.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

- [1150] Coastal Lagoons\*
- [1160] Large Shallow Inlets and Bays
- [1170] Reefs [1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines
- [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks
- [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
- [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes
- [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)
- [21A0] Machairs\*
- [3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals
- [3130] Oligotrophic to Mesotrophic Standing Waters
- [3140] Hard Water Lakes
- [4030] Dry Heath
- [5130] Juniper Scrub
- [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland\*
- [6410] Molinia Meadows
- [6510] Lowland Hay Meadows
- [7230] Alkaline Fens
- [1395] Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*)
- [1833] Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*)

Mannin Bay is an excellent example of a large shallow bay, with a wide range of sediment types. The islets and rocks at the mouth of the bay give some shelter from Atlantic swells. Conditions become more sheltered towards

the head of the bay and are extremely sheltered in Mannin Creek. Tidal streams are weak. There are a very high number of sediment communities for such a small area. Mannin Bay is almost unique as a very large proportion of the bay is dominated by a combination of maerl debris and living maerl. Maerl is free living red calcareous algae generally called 'coral'. The two species that are most abundant in Mannin Bay are *Lithothamnion corallioides* and *Phymatolithon calcareum*. In addition *Lithophyllum fasciatum* and *L. dentatum* have also been recorded. In shallow water, Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) and maerl are found together, an uncommon combination known only from two other locations in Ireland. Mannin Bay has excellent examples of communities characterised by the burrowing brittlestars *Amphiura brachiata* and *A. filiformis*. The brittle star *Ophiopsila annulosa* is present and is an uncommon species. In addition there is an unusual community characterised by the tubeworm *Sabella pavorina* in Mannin Creek. The shores on the south side of Mannin Creek are known to have bivalve communities with unusually high species diversity. The beaches of Mannin Bay are unusual as they are composed of maerl debris.

Mannin Bay has good examples of littoral reef communities that are sheltered from wave action and subject to moderate tidal streams. Shoreline communities follow a zonation of lichen zones followed by *Pelvetia canaliculata* and then barnacles and limpets with *Fucus spiralis*. The zones are narrow (1-1.5 m), which is typical of sheltered shores. Most of the shore is composed of flat bedrock and boulders characterised by dense *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Fucus vesiculosus*. The dogwhelk *Nucella lapillus* is common. On the lower shore is a band of *Fucus serratus* on boulders and bedrock, with sponges, anemones and red algae. In the sublittoral fringe is a mixed flora of kelps (*Laminaria saccharina*, *L. digitata*, *Saccorhiza polyschides* and *Himanthalia elongata*) and red algae, with areas of sand and gravel with maerl. Sponges, anemones, tunicates and bryozoan crusts are common on the vertical sides and under the boulders. In the shelter of Mannin Creek the uncommon community characterised by *Ascophyllum nodosum* var. *mackii* is found on the north side of the creek.

Machair is particularly well developed and forms extensive plains at Mannin Beg and Aillebrack. The machair has a typically herb-rich sward dominated by species such as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) and plantains (*Plantago lanceolata* and *P. coronopus*), with damp areas of Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) and small sedges (*Carex* spp.). The rare liverwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*, a species listed under Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, occurs within damp hollows in the machairs. The population at this site is the largest known in both Ireland and the world.

The machair gives way to bare sand in places with embryonic shifting dunes. These areas are characterised by the presence of Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*) and Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*). Some Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) dunes occur west of Mannin and towards the tip of the Slyne Head headland. Sandy beaches occur at the seaward side of the machair systems, some of which are 'coral' strands composed of the chalky skeletons of red seaweeds (*Lithothamnion* sp. and *Phymatolithion* sp.). Above the beaches typical drift line vegetation and shingle is found with species such as Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali*), Frosted Orache (*Atriplex lacinata*) and Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*). Parts of the shoreline, particularly east of Mannin machair, are fringed with saltmarsh vegetation developed on peat. Typical species found here include Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) and Thrift (*Armeria maritima*). Saltmarsh dominated by dense stands of Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) occur at the entrance to Salt Lough.

Brackish lakes and lagoons are a feature of this site. These include Ballyconneelly Lake, Lough Silverhill, Lough Aillebrack South and Lough Athola. These lakes are shallow, with sandy bottoms and shores, and may be directly connected to the sea. They all receive sea spray and during storms may be flooded by the sea. Characteristic species are pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.), stoneworts (*Chara* spp.) and Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*).

The largest freshwater lake is Lough Anaserd, a typical oligotrophic (nutrient-poor) lake surrounded by heathland. It has a stony shore and numerous rocky islands, some covered with heath vegetation. Aquatic species noted from here include Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*), Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*) and Awlwort (*Subularia aquatica*). The rare Slender Naiad

(*Najas flexilis*), a species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, and listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, is also found here. Truska Lough is another oligotrophic lake and Manninmore Lake is also probably of this type. Other lakes within the site are more nutrient-rich in character, possibly due to a brackish influence (e.g. Dereen Lough), and are fringed with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Many-stalked Spikerush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*). Also of importance are the associated areas of species rich marsh (e.g. Ballyconneely and Bunowen marshes) and fen (e.g. Triska), the latter dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and sedges (*Carex elata*, *C. lasiocarpa*). A scarce orchid, *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*, typically found in calcareous marshes and fens, is recorded from this site.

Lough Aillebrack is considered to be a good example of a hard water lake with Chara formations. Species present which are particularly characteristic of hard water lakes include *C. contraria*, *C. desmacantha* and *C. globularis*. Much of the inland peninsula consists of small fields which contain a complex mosaic of habitats ranging from dry grassland, hay meadow and heath through to wet grassland and marsh. The heath occurs mainly in areas of outcropping rock and is dominated by Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and St. Dabeoc's Heath (*Daboecia cantabrica*). Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) is also a frequent component of the heath communities here. The dry grassland supports vegetation rich in orchid species, including Early Purple-orchid (*Orchis mascula*), the two butterfly orchids (*Platanthera bifolia* and *P. chlorantha*) and the Red Data Book species Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*). Two further Red Data Book species, Pyramidal Bugle (*Ajuga pyramidalis*) and Pale Dog-violet (*Viola lactea*), occur amongst the heath/grassland mosaic. Pale Dog-violet is legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

The habitat type 'Molinia meadows' has been recorded in a number of places within this site, often in association with other habitats, such as fen, wet grassland or heath. Typical species include Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Carnation Sedge (*C. panicea*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*), Tormantil (*Potentilla erecta*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*).

Species-rich lowland hay meadows are also known from this site, supporting species such as Red Fescue, Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Knapweed and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*).

Three Annex I E.U. Birds Directive species are known to breed at the site - Chough (8 pairs in 1992), Sandwich Tern (31 pairs in 1995) and Common Tern (5 pairs in 1995).

The main land use within the site is grazing by cattle, along with some sheep and horses. This is mostly of low to moderate intensity though parts of the machair may be over-grazed. Part of the machair and dune system at Aillebrack has been damaged by the construction of a golf course and this area is excluded from the site. Leisure and tourist related activities may also be damaging parts of the machair system.

This site is of ecological importance for the range and diversity of its semi-natural habitats, many of which are listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive. The interface between calcareous sand dunes, machair, heath and grassland communities is of particular note. The site is also important for a number of rare and scarce species, especially the liverwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*.





**APPENDIX E**



## ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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February 2024

Prepared for  
Terri Conroy

Site Address  
Bunowen Beg, Ballyconneely, Co. Galway



Formerly Enda O'Malley & Associates

## PROJECT PARTICULARS

Project	Retention of existing storage shed on revised site boundaries.
Issue date	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024.
Prepared for	Terri Conroy
Prepared by	OMC

## ECOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the completion of an ecological site survey on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and a desktop study including a review of relevant documentation and previous planning history, it is the finding of ecologist, Ciara Morrin, BSc NUIG, that construction of the storage shed referred to in retention application planning ref. no. 23/60715 has not resulted in any significant impact on the Natura 2000 network or on the local environment.

The 2010 planning act states the following:

“(12) A planning authority shall refuse to consider an application to retain unauthorised development of land where the authority decides that if an application for permission had been made in respect of the development concerned before it was commenced the application would have required that one or more than one of the following was carried out –

- (a) An Environmental Impact Assessment
- (b) A determination as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required, or
- (c) An Appropriate Assessment”

It is my contention that the ‘plan or project’ requires only a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and therefore will fall under the authority of the Galway County Council for decision.

The site is located in the townland of Bunowen Beg, off the Local Road L-11065-0, approx. 2km south west of Ballyconneely village. The site is located partially within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [site code: 002074]. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was completed for the



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retention application which was carried out by Ms. Marie Louise Heffernan CEnv, MIEEM, MSc. of Aster Environmental Consultants Ltd. and concluded that 'No species of conservation importance were identified as impacted on by this development' and 'no pathways exist for indirect impacts (water pollution) in this case due to the lack of watercourses within the area.' Thus, the development 'screened out for Appropriate Assessment' and no mitigation would have been required. As no adverse impacts on the conservation objectives of the SAC occurred, no remedial action is necessary.

The development consists of a 24m<sup>2</sup> shed for drying herbs and for storing horticultural and other equipment. Habitats present within the site boundaries were recorded as Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3), Wet Grassland (GS4), Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1), Horticultural land (BC2), Exposed siliceous rock (ER1), and Immature woodland Trees /scrub (WS2). The accuracy of the habitat survey completed in the AA (June 2023) was confirmed by a site visit carried out on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and a review of relevant documentation as well as photographs taken of the land just prior to, and at the beginning construction in June 2016 (Appendix A).

All construction was completed by hand using only hand tools and natural or reclaimed materials, including clay, wattle, timber, stone, sheep's wool, and lime mortar. Additionally, it features a low-level grass roof, resulting in minimal, if any, environmental or visual impact on its surroundings. The shed is not habitable. It does not have running water or an electrical connection. As stated above, its sole use is for drying of herbs and storage of horticultural materials and equipment. All construction materials were sustainably sourced and a wheelbarrow was used to transport materials on site. No machinery or plant were utilised during construction. No modifications were made with regard to access routes to the shed and so it is only accessible by foot.

Demolition of the shed would involve the use of heavy machinery and so an access route to the site would need to be cleared. This would most likely cause more disruption to surrounding habitats than the construction of the shed.

As can be seen from the photos below, the habitats present in the footprint of the development were exposed rock and wet grassland. Neither of these are habitats of conservation importance for which the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC was selected.

Potential impacts of the development were evaluated during the construction and the operational phase.

Potential impacts during the Construction Phase are evaluated as follows:



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### **Impacts on Habitats**

The development resulted in minor loss of wet grassland habitat (GS4). Loss of this habitat within the footprint of the development is not considered to be significant at any geographical scale. No habitats or flora which represent the conservation objectives of the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC were lost as a result of this development. As one of the final steps in the construction process, a grass roof was constructed atop the shed which consists of native grass and wildflower species.

### **Impacts on Hydrology**

No surface water drains exist on site. No hydrological connections were identified to any of the qualifying interests to the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC. As the development was entirely built by hand, using only natural materials, there is no possibility of the migration of pollutants (e.g. hydrocarbons, fuel, sedimentation, cement) off-site into surrounding areas of ecological sensitivity. This also means there is no potential for deterioration of groundwater due to percolation of polluting materials through the bedrock beneath the site. There is no potential for adverse impacts on water quality.

### **Impacts on Fauna – Disturbance/habitat loss**

Due to the minimally invasive construction methods used throughout the build, there is no potential for any significant disturbance on local animal species. No evidence of faunal species of conservation importance to the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or any Natura 2000 site was recorded at the site.

Potential impacts during the operational phase are evaluated as follows:

### **Impacts on Habitats**

No additional loss or fragmentation of habitats has occurred during the operational phase of this development. Thus, no negative effects, whether direct or indirect, are associated with habitats within the proposed development boundaries, or with adjacent habitats, as a result of the operational phase of this project.

### **Impacts on Hydrology**

The shed does not have running water and is not fitted with any plumbing connections. No impacts on hydrology have occurred or are anticipated to occur during the operational phase of this development.





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## Impacts on Fauna

As previously assessed, no evidence of faunal species of conservation importance to the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC was observed within the footprint of the development. As the development is within the vicinity of a residential dwelling, local wildlife species are likely to be habituated to anthropogenic activities associated with the operational phase. The operational phase of the development has not and will not result in increased anthropogenic activities on site. Thus, no negative impacts on local faunal species, whether direct or indirect, are anticipated to result from the operational phase of the proposed project.

Although the development lies within the SAC, no habitats or species which represent the qualifying Interests of the protected site were located on site, therefore, no direct impacts occurred as a result of this development. Lack of hydrological connectivity to the qualifying interests of the site, in conjunction with the minimally invasive construction methods rules out indirect impacts on the SAC.

Following a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the development including a review of all relevant documentation and planning history at the site, there is no evidence to suggest that any adverse impacts on the conservation objectives of the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC or the local environment occurred as a result of this development.

Signed: Ciara Morrin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ciara Morrin'.



Formerly Enda O'Malley & Associates

# Appendix A



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*Figure 1: Commencement of construction (June 2016) on wet grassland (GS4)*



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*Figure 2: Commencement of construction: Shallow excavations using a spade (June 2016)*





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*Figure 3: Shallow excavations dug by hand (June 2016)*



**APPENDIX F**

**From:** [Planning](#)  
**To:** [Anne Mooney](#)  
**Subject:** RE: 23/60715 and 24/60236  
**Date:** 06 March 2025 12:27:09  
**Attachments:** [image005.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)  
[image010.png](#)

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Hi Anne,

We only make a Planners Report available when a decision on a planning application has been made.

I can send you an extract of the Planners Recommendation which I can do in two separate emails to follow to avoid confusion.

Kind regards,

Sinéad.

Planning & Development Unit | Rannóg Pleanála  
Galway County Council | Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Áras an Chontae, Cnoc na Radharc, Gaillimh H91 H6KX



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**Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe**  
**Galway County Council**

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**From:** Anne Mooney <[anne.mooney@omcgroup.ie](mailto:anne.mooney@omcgroup.ie)>  
**Sent:** Thursday 6 March 2025 11:06  
**To:** Planning <[planning@GalwayCoCo.ie](mailto:planning@GalwayCoCo.ie)>  
**Subject:** 23/60715 and 24/60236

Hello,

Is it possible to get the planners report please for the above files? I see they are on E-Plan but are restricted viewing.

Thanks,

Anne

**Anne Mooney**  
Senior Planner

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**Dublin Office:** Fitzwilliam Hall, Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin

**Clifden Office:** Unit 1 Bridge St, Clifden, Co Galway



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- **FIRE SAFETY DESIGN**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY**
- **MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL DESIGN**
- **STRUCTURAL DESIGN**
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Is é Microsoft , Arna Óstáil do Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe, a rinne an teachtaireacht ríomhphoist seo a scanadh agus a ghlanadh ó thaobh ábhair de. Tá míle fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge nó i mBéarla. Tá eolas atá príobháideach agus rúnda sa ríomhphost seo agus in aon iatán a ghabhann leis agus is don seolaí amháin é. Mura seolaí thú, níl tú údaraithe an ríomhphost nó aon iatán a ghabhann leis a léamh, a chóipeáil ná a úsáid. Má tá an ríomhphost seo faighte agat trí dhearmad, cuir an seoltóir ar an eolas trí ríomhphost a sheoladh ar ais agus scríos ansin é le do thoil. Má tá an ríomhphost seo ag teastáil uait i bhformáid eile téigh i dteagmháil leis an duine a sheol chugat é. This e-mail message has been scanned for content and cleared by Microsoft Hosted for Galway County Council. Correspondence is welcome in Irish or in English. This e-mail and any attachment contains information which is private and confidential and is intended for the addressee only. If you are not an addressee, you are not authorised to read, copy or use the e-mail or any attachment. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender by return e-mail and then destroy it. If you need this email in an alternative format please contact the sender.