REMEDIAL NATURA IMPACT STATEMENT

JUNE 2025

Prepared for
Terri Conroy

Site Address
Bunowen Beg, Ballyconeelly, Co. Galway

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REMEDIAL NATURA IMPACT STATEMENT

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01	Final	14/06/25	CM

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Statement of Authority

This report was prepared by Ciara Morrin B.Sc (Hons) Marine Science University of Galway. Ciara has experience carrying out habitat/botanical surveys, as well as bird and mammal surveys. She has completed multiple Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, Ecological Impact Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments. She has completed courses in all of the above, as well as courses in Biodiversity Net Gain and incorporating biodiversity in engineering.

1.0 Introduction

OMC has been retained by Terri Conroy to carry out a remedial Natura Impact Statement (rNIS), prepared by Ciara Morrin for;

Retention of a hand-built shed/storage space without plumping or electricity connections which lies within the curtilage of a residential development, adjacent to an existing house.

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]. As such, the potential impacts of the proposed works must be assessed by the competent authority, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Assessment of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites). This report provides the necessary information for the completion of an Appropriate Assessment regarding the potential impacts of the proposed works on sites of European importance.

1.1 Information sources and surveys

The site surveys were carried out on Wednesday 17th January 2024 and Friday 25th April 2025.

The Screening Statement for AA is, in part, informed by:

- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- European Commission (2002) Management of Plans and Projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the

provision of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Office for Official Publications for the European Communities, Luxembourg.

1.2 Requirement for Appropriate Assessment

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, commonly referred to 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), hereon referred to as the 'Birds Directive' are European Community Legislations established for the conservation of biodiversity and natural habitats. Sites, species and habitats under protection of Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive) are referred to as Natura 2000 sites (also referred to as European sites in the 2011 Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations). The term Natura 2000 sites will be used in this report. Two types of Natura 2000 site designation exist and are categorised as follows;

- the Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated for the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats of European ecological importance under the Habitats Directive.
- the Special Protection Area (SPA), which is designated for the conservation of bird species and habitats of European ecological importance under the Birds Directive.

These 2 categories of sites collectively comprise a network of European protected areas, 'Natura 2000'.

The term 'Qualifying Interests' (QI) refers to the specific named habitats and/or non-bird species which require protection and for which an SAC or SPA is designated. The term Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) refers to the named bird species which requires protection and for which an SPA is designated. However, the terminology of QI is predominantly used in practice for non-bird and bird species alike. The term Qualifying Interests is used throughout this report.

Habitats which require protection are listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive and include lakes, rivers, heaths and turloughs, as well as raised bogs and active blanket bogs. Species who's habitats require protection are listed in Annex II (Habitats Directive) and include Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Salmon and Otter. Endangered and migratory species which require SPAs are listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Naturally, protection is given on the basis of priority, with specific/heightened protection strategies pertaining to certain habitats/species.

1.3 Methodology

Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive outline the testing mechanisms which underpin the decision-making process for the consideration of plans and projects that could significantly impact the ecological integrity of a Natura 2000 site. The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government guidelines (DOELHG, 2009) indicates the European Commission's methodological guidance (EC 2000, 2002, 2006, 2018), outlining the approach of how plans and projects should be carried out within Natura 2000 sites. This is categorised as a 4-stage process. Whether a further stage is required is dependent on the outcome of each successive stage.

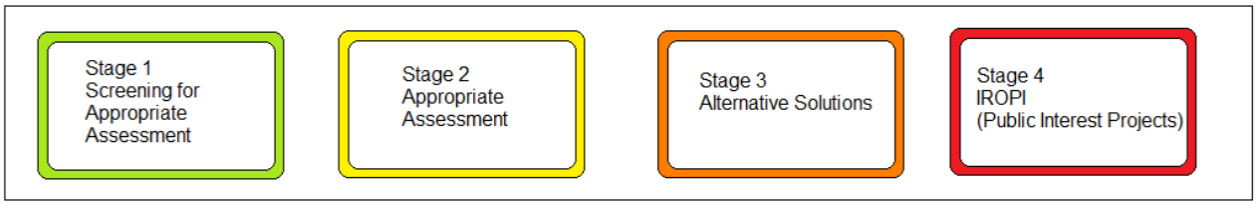


Figure 1: Stages of Appropriate Assessment

1.4 Screening

This examines the likely effects of a project or plan on a Natura 2000 site, and determines whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. There are four steps involved in this process which are outlined as follows;

1. It must be considered whether the project or plan is inherently connected to or necessary to the management of the site.

2. A description of the project or plan, in conjunction with other projects or plans which, together, could possibly have a significant effect on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site.

3. Identification of the possible ecological effects on the Natura 2000 site.

4. An assessment of the significance of the potential effects.

1.5 Scope

The objective of the screening exercise is to determine the possible implications of the project, alone or in conjunction with other plans or projects 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)

Following the preliminary screening, if effects are deemed significant or indeterminate on the conservation objectives and the general integrity of Natura 2000 sites, further assessment under Article 6(3) is necessary and it is recommended that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) be completed.

In the case of works already completed, a remedial NIS (rNIS) is completed retrospectively.

2.0 Description of development

The development description is the first step to properly identifying possible impacts. This should include all features of the project so that each can be individually considered in respect of the conservation objectives of nearby Natura 2000 sites.

2.1 Site Location

The proposed development site is located in Bunowen Beg, Ballyconeelly, Co. Galway. The site is accessed to the east of a Local Road L-11065-0, approx. 2km south west of Ballyconneely village. The proposed development site consists of an existing residential dwelling and (shed, to be retained), on an area of land which measures approximately 0.4546 hectares in area. The site is surrounded in agricultural land, with relatively few other residential properties in the area.

2.2 Project description

The proposed project is to retain:

A hand-built shed/storage space without plumping or electricity connections which lies within the curtilage of a residential development, adjacent to an existing house.

The approximate total area within the site boundaries is 0.4546 Ha.

The site is currently walled/ fenced off from the surrounding landscape and is used residentially as well as horticulturally. The project is small in terms of size and scale.

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.

Works carried out at the subject site to date have included:

Stages that occurred to facilitate this development:

1. Levelling site to commence construction

2. Building was by hand using wood and lime mortar

3. Sowing of native grass species and wildflowers to form a vegetated roof

While the works were completed within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (002074), the habitats consist of those which are already semi-improved due to the residential nature of the site and do not represent the Conservation Objectives of the SAC.

Map 1: Location of the proposed development site (blue outline), (Source: Bing maps)

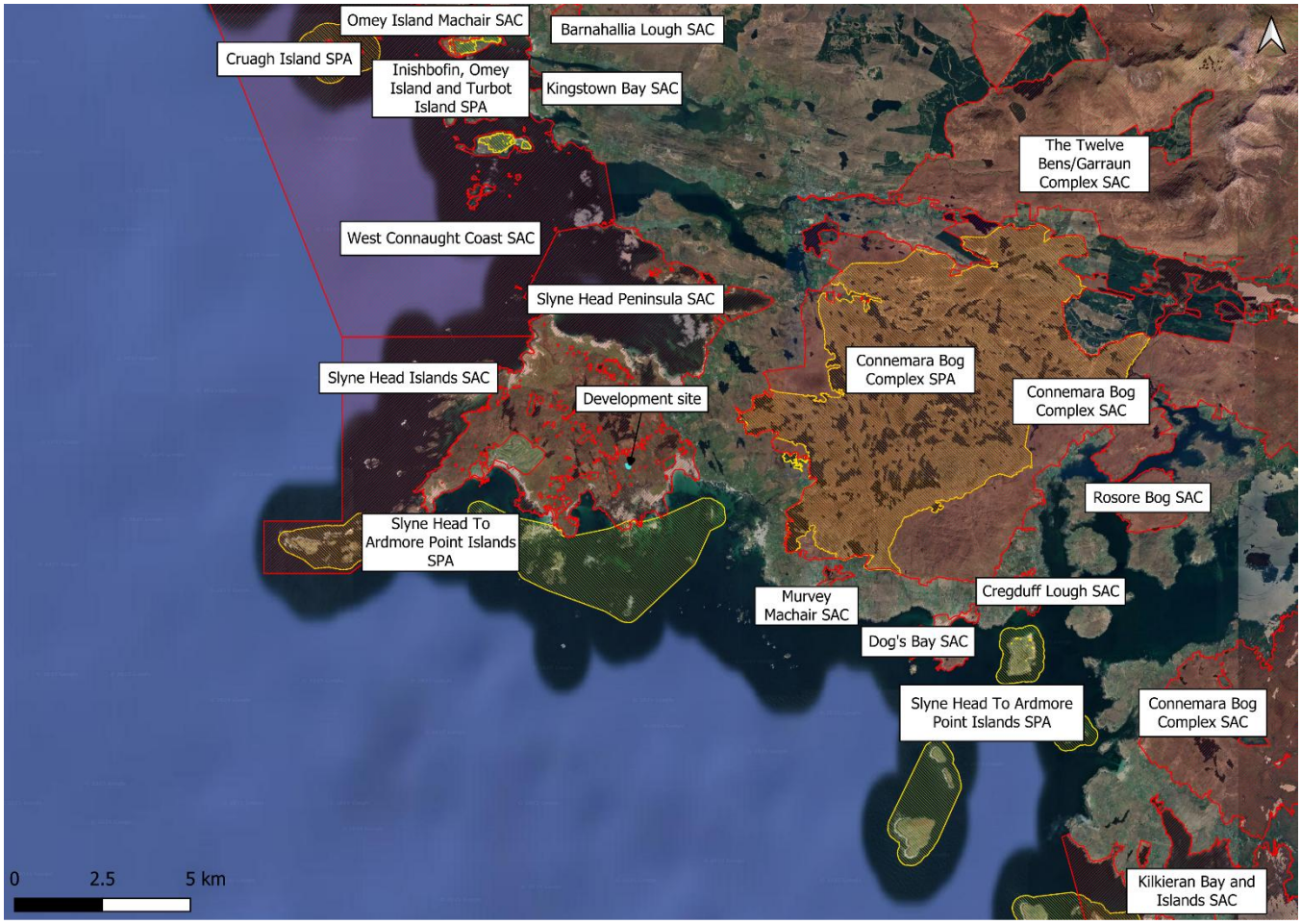
Map 2: Site layout (full version submitted with application)

2.3 Relationship to designated sites

As per NPWS guidelines, Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the proposed project were initially posed for consideration. The table below lists Natura 2000 sites within the 15km screening radius.

Table 1: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development site

Natura 2000 Site	Code	Distance
Slyne Head Penninsula SAC	002074	0.00km
Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands SPA	004159	1.2km S
Connemara Bog Complex SPA	004181	3.31km NE
Connemara Bog Complex SAC	002034	3.31km NE
Murvey Machair SAC	002129	6.11km SE
West Connacht Coast SAC	002998	4.5km NW
Slyne Head Islands SAC	000328	4.0km NW
Twelve Bens Garraun Complex SAC	002031	8.96km NE
Dogs Bay SAC	001257	9.19km SE
Cregduff Lough SAC	001251	11.06km SE
Inishbofin, Omey Island and Inishturbot SPA	004231	9.33km NNW
Kingstown Bay SAC	002265	10.25km N
Rosroe Bog SAC	000324	13.75km E
Barnahallia Lough SAC	002118	12.36km N
Omey Island Machair SAC	001309	12.44km NW
Cruagh Island SPA	004170	13.3km NW



Map 3: Location of development site in relation to local Natura 2000 sites

2.4 Zone of Influence

The "Zone of Influence" can be defined as the difference between the spatial footprint of a project or development and the extent of the developments' effects on the surrounding environment, in relation to habitat and species populations. When assessing effects on wildlife habitats and populations we must consider light, noise and hydrological connections. National guidance (DEHLG 2009) states that "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.

When defining the zone of influence, it is important to consider;

- Location of Natura 2000 sites

- The area extent to which downstream habitats could be polluted
- To what degree could noise and light impact ecological receptors

Table 2: Relevance of nearby Natura 2000 Sites to the proposed development site

Natura 2000 Site	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 13/06/2025	Distance
Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [002074]	- Coastal lagoons [1150] - Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] - Reefs [1170] - Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] - Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] - Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] - Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] - Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]	0.0m from the proposed development site. The development site lies partially within the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (approx. 1780m²). Direct impacts cannot be ruled out. The NPWS spatial data (2019) recorded European dry heaths [4030] within the proposed development boundaries. However, this habitat was not recorded on site during the site surveys. Due to the absence of a buffering distance, the site is within the Likely Zone of Impact and is considered further in this Screening assessment.

	- Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] - Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] - Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] - Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] - European dry heaths [4030] - Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] - Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] - Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510]	

	- Alkaline fens [7230] - Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] - Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395] - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	
Inishbofin, Omey Island and Turbot Island SPA [site code: 004231]	- Corncrake (*Crex crex*)	9.33km northwest of the proposed development at its closest point. The Corncrake (Crex crex) is the sole SCI for this SPA. The corncrake breeds in rough pastures, and hay and sileage meadows. As such, the habitats within and surrorunding the development boundaries do not provide suitable ex-situ habitat for this SCI species. No complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.

Slyne Head To Ardmore Point Islands SPA [site code: 004159]	- Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis) [A045] - Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191] - Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194] - Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195]	The Slyne Head To Ardmore Point Island SPA lies approximately 1.2km south of the proposed development and is therefore within the core foraging range of 15km for the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). However, no Barnacle Geese were observed to be using the habitats within or adjacent to the site. The habitats on site do not represent suitable ex-situ habitat for A191 Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), A194 Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), A195 Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*). No complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Slyne Head Islands SAC [site code: 000328]	- Reefs [1170] - Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	4.0km northwest of the proposed development at its closest point. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. No species or

	- Halichoerus grypus (Grey Seal) [1364]	habitats listed as QIs of this SAC were identified within the proposed development site. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 6.0km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC [002031]	- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] - Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]	8.96km northeast of the proposed development at its closest point. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 8.96km from the proposed development site to

	- Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] - Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] - Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] - Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110] - Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] - Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220] - Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] - Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] - Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] - Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Connemara Bog Complex SAC [002034]	- Coastal lagoons [1150] - Reefs [1170]	3.31km northeast of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as

	- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] - Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] - Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160] - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] - Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] - European dry heaths [4030] - Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] - Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] - Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 3.31km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.

	- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] - Alkaline fens [7230] - Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] - Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] - Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] - Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	
Connemara Bog Complex SPA [004081]	- Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] - Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] - Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] - Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]	The Connemara Bog Complex SPA lies 3.31km northeast of the proposed development site at its closest point and is therefore outside the core foraging range of 3km for Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*). It is within the core foraging range of 5km for the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), 35km Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and 50km for Common Gull (*Larus canus*). Due to the lack of open waters for the Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), wooded/heath areas for the Merlin (*Falco columbarius),* and open habitats for Common

		Gull (*Larus canus*) and Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), as outlined in the SSCO document for Connemara Bog Complex SPA, the proposed development site does not offer suitable ex-situ supporting habitat for these SCI species. Furthermore, given that all construction was completed by hand and did not involve the use of any heavy machinery, it is not considered that there is any potential for disturbance to SCI species. Common Gull breed on lake islands and forage in terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats in the broader area. No suitable breeding habitat exists within the vicinity of the development. Although Common Gull likely forage in terrestrial habitats in the general area of the development site, the site does not provide significant supporting habitat for this species and the development, as described, does not have the potential to result in disturbance levels which would significantly impact this SCI species. No impacts are identified.

		Although dry heath habitats exist in the local area, much of the land is regularly grazed by sheep which causes disturbance and habitat alteration, making the areas unlikely to be used by Merlin (*Falco columbarius)* and Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) for breeding and foraging purposes. Furthermore, given that all construction was completed by hand and did not involve the use of any heavy machinery, it is not considered that there is any potential for disturbance to SCI species. No Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria),* Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) or Common Gull (*Lanus canus*) were observed using the habitats within or adjacent to the site. No impacts are anticipated.
Dog's Bay SAC [001257]	- Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] - Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] - Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	9.19km southeast of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 9.19km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor

	- European dry heaths [4030]	chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Rosroe Bog SAC [site code: 000324]	- Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] - Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	13.75km east of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. No species or habitats listed as QIs of this SAC were identified within the proposed development site. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 13.75km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when

		considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Cregduff Lough SAC [site code: 000324]	- Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	11.06km southeast of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 11.06km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.

Cruagh Island SPA [site code: 0004170]	- Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013] - Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis) [A045]	The Cruagh Island SPA lies approximately 13.3km northwest of the proposed development site and is therefore within the core foraging range of 15km for the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). However, no Barnacle Geese were observed to be using the habitats within or adjacent to the site. Furthermore, given that all construction was completed by hand and did not involve the use of any heavy machinery, it is not considered that there is any potential for disturbance to SCI species. The Manx Shearwater breeds on coastal habitats. The habitats withing the development boundaries do not provide suitable ex-situ supporting habitat for this SCI species. Furthermore, no Manx Shearwater were observed to be utilising the habitats within or adjacent to the proposed development site. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone

		of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Murvey Machair SAC [site code: 002129]	- Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] - Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]	6.11km southeast of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 6.11km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Omey Island Machair SAC [site code: 001309]	- Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] - Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] - Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]	12.44km northwest of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development.

		Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 12.44km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Kingstown Bay SAC [site code: 002265]	- Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]	10.25km north of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 10.25km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded.

		No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
Barnahallia Lough SAC [site code: 004144]	- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	12.36km north of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 12.36km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone

		of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.
West Connaught Coast SAC [site code: 002998]	- Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349] - Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]	4.5km northwest of the proposed development site. There will be no direct impact on the SAC as it is located outside of the footprint of the proposed development. Due to the absence of a hydrological connection between the proposed development site and this SAC, and due to the buffering distance of 4.5km from the proposed development site to this SAC, no complete source-pathway-receptor chain was identified and potential for indirect impact on the European Site can be excluded. No pathway for significant effect on this European Designated Site was identified, when considered in the absence of any mitigation, individually or cumulatively with other plans or projects and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact and is not considered further in this Screening assessment.

Based on the information contained in Table 2 above, the Natura 2000 sites which are recorded as within the Likely Zone of Impact are:

- Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [site code: 002074]

Due to the size and scale of the proposed project, in conjunction with its proximity and relevant connectivity to ecological receptors, the only sites which are recorded as being within the likely Zone of Impact are the Slyne Head Peninsula SAC [site code: 002074]. No source-pathway-receptor chains were identified for the other sites within 15km. Thus, no further investigation is required.

Map 4: Location of proposed development site in relation to Natura 2000 sites being considered further

3.0 Description of the Natura 2000 Sites within the ZOI

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 primary objective of the Habitats Directive is the upkeep of biodiversity through the conservation, maintenance and when appropriate, restoration of natural habitats and associated flora and fauna populations which have been

deemed of community interest. Each Natura 2000 site has Conservation Objectives which have been set out on a case-by-case basis by competent authority for the management of SACs and SPAs, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). European and national legislations enforce the proper maintenance of habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network in light of the conservation objectives, to ensure favourable conservation status at a national level.

3.1 Slyne Head Peninsula SAC

Table 3: Conservation Objectives for Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (Site Code 0002074)

Code	Habitats	Restore/Maintain
[1150]	Coastal lagoons*	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[1160]	Large shallow inlets and bays	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[1170]	Reefs	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[1210]	Annual vegetation of drift lines	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[1220]	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[1330]	Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[1395]	Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[1410]	Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[1833]	Slender Naiad *Najas flexilis*	To maintain the favourable conservation condition

[2110]	Embryonic shifting dunes	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[2120]	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes)	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[21A0]	Machairs (*in Ireland)	To restore the favourable conservation condition
[3110]	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[3140]	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara* spp.	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[4030]	European dry heaths	To maintain to favourable conservation condition
[5130]	*Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[6210]	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[6410]	*Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[6510]	Lowland hay meadows (*Alopercurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition
[7230]	Alkaline fens	To maintain the favourable conservation condition

In the event that significant negative effects on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site are anticipated, the conservation condition of qualifying interests should be taken into account and it should be noted that to “restore” favourable conservation condition is more difficult than to “maintain”.

4.0 Receiving Environment

When assessing the receiving environment, it is important to consider which classifications of habitats are present on the proposed site, as well as hydrology in the surrounding area and the presence of invasive species.

4.1 Habitats

A walkover survey was carried out to classify the habitat on site. The habitats recorded are classified in accordance with 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000), which designates habitat classifications based on the identified plant species and management history of the area.

Map 5: Habitat map of proposed development site (pre-construction)

The habitats above were identified to be in situ pre-construction. Evidence was gathered during walk over surveys carried out in January 2024 and June 2025. A review of aerial photography from 2006-present was reviewed along with photographs of the site from the ground. The habitats were classified as follows:

Wet Grassland GS4

Species include: Rushes (*Juncus spp.)* and Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Buttercup (*Ranunculus spp.)*, Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) Sedge (*Carex spp*), White clover (*Trifolium repens*) and Bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*). The area of wet grassland within the curtilage of the residential space has seen planting of native tree species in the last few years and now forms mosaics with Immature woodland WS2 and native scrub WS1 habitat.

Horticultural land BC2

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. This area is still primarily used for horticulture but some of the area is now considered native scrub (WS1) and hedging (WL1).

Exposed siliceous rock ER1

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*). These areas have largely since become overgrown with native scrub and grass species, although the above species remain.

Buildings and Roads BL3

The buildings and access roads are transparent on the above map. The new storage shed is not included as it is a pre-construction map. The storage shed is presently considered to be in this category. The grass roof is comprised of native species and is considered to be Dry/Humid Acid Grassland GS3.

Immature woodland Trees /scrub WS2

This mainly consists of Willow (*Salix spp.*) and much of this area has now become dense native scrub (WS1) habitat. The above map shows the habitat as it was pre-construction.

The primary land use in the area is agricultural with few residential developments.

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.

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

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

4.2 Invasive Species

No invasive species listed in the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 477 of 2011) were documented during the survey conducted in June. (E.g. Rhododendron (*Rhododendrum ponticum*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).)

4.3 Hydrology

Hydrology assumes a critical role in the ecological evaluation of a site. Water pollution is one of the main factors responsible for indirect impacts on Natura 2000 sites through the migration of pollution (sediments and hydrocarbons) downstream where they come into contact with conservation objectives.

Water quality information and individual waterbody status for all river districts and coastal waters in Ireland can be accessed through the online EPA map viewer. This map viewer was consulted on 10th May 2025.

The proposed development site is located in the hydrological sub-catchment Recess_SC_020. The WFD coastal water bodies risk assessed the coastal waters

(IE_WE_010_0000) Aran Islands, Galway Bay Connemara "Review". The overall status of this waterbody is described as 'high' ecological status in the WFD monitoring programme (2016-2021).

The site is located in the Spiddal groundwater catchment and has been assigned a status of 'not at risk' in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) ground waterbody approved risk. The groundwater status of this catchment has been assigned as 'good' status in the WFD groundwater monitoring programme (2016-2021).

Map 6: River flow direction (Source: EPA Maps)

4.4 Fauna

4.4.1 Birds

All bird species recorded during both the site visits are recorded in Table 3. Nine bird species were observed in total, one of which are of Amber conservation status and eight of which are green-listed and are regarded as common Irish bird species. No Annex I species were observed to be utilising the habitats within the site during the site visit.

Table 4: Bird species observed on site

Species	Observed	Conservation Status
Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)	On site	Green listed
Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)	On site	Green listed
Great Tit (*Parus major*)	On site	Green listed
Blue Tit (*Parus parus*)	On site	Green listed
Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)	On site	Green listed
Eurasian skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)	Flying over	Amber listed
Hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*)	Flying over	Green listed
Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)	On site	Green listed
Eurasian wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)	On site	Green listed

The development did not involve the removal of any trees or hedging, therefore there is no potential for direct impacts on nesting birds. From a review of past aerial photography of the site, scrub habitat has increased in the past ten years. Furthermore, given that all construction was completed by hand and did not involve the use of any heavy machinery, it is not considered that there is any potential for disturbance to any of the above species.

4.4.2 Non-volant mammals

A walkover survey was carried out to assess the presence of a range of protected animal species, as well as their associated habitats. The results of the walkover survey concluded that no significant faunal species or habitat was recorded.

An otter survey was undertaken with the goal of assessing habitats on site for the suitability of otter. No watercourses or drainage ditches were observed within the vicinity of the development site. The site was searched for evidence of otter including holts, couches, spraints or tracks. No signs of otter were observed. it is assessed that there is no identified potential for the described development to have resulted in significant impacts on otter.

A badger (Meles meles) survey was performed during the field survey which was in compliance with TII/NRA (2009) guidelines (Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes). The site was searched for setts, latrines, shuffle holes, and badger paths and prints. The survey concluded that no evidence of badgers was recorded within the proposed development site. No impacts on badger are predicted to have occurred as a result of the development.

4.4.3 Other species

The site was searched for evidence of species which are protected under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976-2018, including Irish hare, Irish stoat and pygmy shrew. These species are widespread in Ireland and are likely to be found in the broader area. However, no signs of species were located within the site boundaries. No impacts are predicted.

5.0 Impact prediction and assessment

Following a description of the proposed project and of the nearby Natura 2000 sites, an assessment for possible impacts can be carried out. This is in compliance with the "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".

Table 5: Proximity and relevance of Qualifying Interests of Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (Site Code 0002074)

Code	Habitats	Proximity of habitat/species
[1150]	Coastal lagoons*	960m east at Lough Ballyconneely. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1160]	Large shallow inlets and bays	390m south. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted

[1170]	Reefs	390m south. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1210]	Annual vegetation of drift lines	1.11km southeast. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1220]	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	915m southeast. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1330]	Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)	410m southwest. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1395]	Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*)	2.42km west of development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted
[1410]	Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)	410m southwest. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[1833]	Slender Naiad *Najas flexilis*	710m north in Lough Anaserd. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[2110]	Embryonic shifting dunes	1.74km southwest. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted
[2120]	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes)	1.11km southeast. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact identified.
[21A0]	Machairs (*in Ireland)	800m southeast. No source-pathway

		receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[3110]	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains	Potentially 710m north at Lough Anserd. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[3140]	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara* spp.	830m west at Lough Derreen. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[4030]	European dry heaths	NPWS spatial data (2019) recorded this habitat as within the development boundaries. However, the habitat was not recorded within the development boundaries during the site surveys. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[5130]	*Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	Not mapped by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Not recorded within vicinity of the proposed development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[6210]	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites)	Not mapped by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Not recorded within vicinity of the proposed development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[6410]	*Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or	Not mapped by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Not recorded

	clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)	within vicinity of the proposed development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[6510]	Lowland hay meadows (*Alopercurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*)	Not mapped by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Not recorded within vicinity of the proposed development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.
[7230]	Alkaline fens	Not mapped by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Not recorded within vicinity of the proposed development site. No source-pathway receptor chain identified. No impact predicted.

5.1 Impacts on Habitats

No impacts on QI habitats are predicted to have resulted from this development. As illustrated by past aerial photography of the site, and by Figures 2 and 3 above, the habitat on which the development was build was categorised as Wet Grassland GS4. 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. No concrete was used in the development. No foundations were poured. No hydrological connectivity to above listed QI habitats was identified. The Likely Zone of Impact is confined to the immediate footprint of the development. Therefore, there is no potential for the development to have adversely impacted QI habitats. The area of Wet Grassland GS4 which was lost as a result of the development has been compensated in the form of a native grass roof. No impacts are identified.

Furthermore, planting of native shrubs and tree species on the site has seen a net gain of biodiversity since the development was built through the enhancement of habitats which support bird, mammal and pollinator species.

5.2 Impacts on Species

No impacts on QI species are predicted to have resulted from this development. As stated above, all construction were completed by hand using only hand tools and natural or reclaimed materials, including clay, wattle, timber, stone, sheep's wool, and lime mortar. No concrete was used in the development. No foundations were poured. No hydrological connectivity to above listed QI species was identified. The Likely Zone of Impact is confined to the immediate footprint of the development. Planting of native grass and wildflower species to form a grass roof dictates no net loss has occurred as a result of this development. Planting of native shrubs and tree species on the site since the build has seen a net gain of biodiversity since the development was built.

5.3 Do Nothing Impact

If the proposed development were to be left undisturbed, the site would continue to be used as a residential home, and the land would continue to be used for residential amenity and horticulture. The shed would continue to be used for storage and drying of herbs. No impacts are predicted.

5.4 Impacts of demolition

As stated in Section 2, 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 is predicted to result in unnecessary disturbance to local wildlife and habitat loss, on at least a temporary basis.

5.5 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are alterations to the environment arising from the combined impact of past, present and future anthropogenic activities and natural processes. When examining cumulative impacts, it is important to look at activities causing disturbance or pollution to the same Natura 2000 sites.

Pressures on the ecosystem can be listed and evaluated on the basis of pressure positive, negative or neutral on the designated sites that are under consideration for the proposed project.

Table 6: Cumulative assessment

Plans/Activities in the Area	Relevance/Description
Galway County Development plan 2022-2028	**National Heritage/Biodiversity** NHB1- Natural Heritage and Biodiversity of Designated Sites, Habitats and Species. Protect and where possible enhance the natural heritage sites designated under EU Legislation and National Legislation (Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and Wildlife Acts) and extend to any additions or alterations to sites that may occur during the lifetime of this plan. Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under European legislation (Habitats and Birds Directive) and protected under national Legislation (European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011), Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 and the Flora Protection Order (SI 94 of 1999). Support the protection, conservation and enhancement of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the protection of the integrity of European sites, that form part of the Natura 2000 network, the protection of Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, Wild Fowl Sanctuaries (and other designated sites including any future designations) and the promotion of the development of a green/ ecological network. NHB2- European Sites and Appropriate Assessment. To implement Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and to

	ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. All such projects and plans will also be required to comply with statutory Environmental Impact Assessment requirements where relevant. NHB 3 – Protection of European Sites. No plans, programmes, or projects etc. giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects.* NHB4 - Ecological Appraisal of Biodiversity. 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 NHB5 - Ecological Connectivity and Corridors 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. NHB9 - Protection of Bats and Bats Habitats. Seek to protect bats and their roosts, their feeding areas, flight paths and commuting routes. Ensure that development proposals in areas which are potentially important for bats, including areas of woodland, linear features such as hedgerows, stonewalls, watercourses and associated riparian vegetation which may provide migratory/foraging uses shall be subject to suitable assessment for potential impacts on bats. This will include an assessment of the cumulative loss of habitat or the impact on bat populations and activity in the area and may include a specific bat survey. Assessments shall be carried out by a suitably qualified professional and where development is likely to result in significant adverse effects on bat populations or activity in the area, development will be prohibited or require mitigation and/or compensatory measures, as appropriate. The impact of lighting on bats and their roosts and the lighting up of objects of cultural heritage must be adequately assessed in relation to new developments and the upgrading of existing lighting systems. **Water Objectives** WR 1- Water Resources. Protect the water resources in the plan area, including rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, springs, turloughs, surface water and groundwater quality, as well as surface waters, aquatic and wetland habitats and freshwater and water dependant species in accordance with the

Northern & Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 2032 (RSES)	requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the River Basin District Management Plan 2018 – 2021 and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same) and also have regard to the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-Basin Management Plans. WR 2 - River Basin Management Plans. It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to implement the programme of measures developed by the River Basin District Projects under the Water Framework Directive in relation to: Surface and groundwater interaction, Dangerous substances, Hydro-morphology, Forestry, On site wastewater treatment systems, Municipal and industrial discharges, Urban pressures, Abstractions. RPO 5.4 Encourage the prioritisation of Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO) for all sites of Conservation Value, designated in EU Directive (i.e., SACs, SPAs) to integrate with the development objectives of this Strategy. RPO 5.5 Ensure efficient and sustainable use of all our natural resources, including inland waterways, peatlands, and forests in a manner which ensures a healthy society a clean environment and there is no net contribution to biodiversity loss arising from development supported in this strategy. Conserve and protect designated areas and natural heritage areas. Conserve and protect European sites and their integrity. RPO 5.7 Ensure that all plans, projects, and activities requiring consent arising from the RSES are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA, and AA as appropriate.

Planning applications in the area	A search was conducted on the Galway County Council website of local planning applications in the last 5 years which gave the following results: Permission to (1) renovate and alter existing house (2) construct new side and front elevation single storey extensions (3) install new effluent treatment system and polishing filter (4) alter existing site entrance and upgrade existing access road as well as all ancillary site works. This planning application is accompanied by a NIS, as required by Article 239 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). Gross floor space of proposed works: 136.00 sqm. (Planning Ref: 20/165) - Granted Permission for a change of house design, previously granted under PL Ref No. 18/1872. Gross floor space of proposed works: 172.29 sqm. Gross floor space of work to be retained: 60.20 sqm (Planning Ref: 21/195) - Granted Permission to 1) construct a new porch to the front elevation of existing house, 2) proposed extension to the rear elevation of the existing dwelling house, 3) proposed external elevation changes and internal alterations to existing dwelling house, 4) proposed domestic garage, 5) replace existing septic tank and percolation area with new treatment system with polishing filter as well as all ancillary site works. This application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement. (Planning ref.: 20/1272) - Granted Retention of alterations to permitted garage, granted under PL Ref No. 201272, for (1) two additional Velux windows in roof, (2) two windows on the western elevation of garage, (3) one door to the east elevation of the garage, (4) new window and door to south elevation of garage, (5) stone cladding on the west elevation of the garage, (6) minor internal alterations to garage (Planning Ref: 24/60084) - Granted Refurbishment and upgrading works [including (where necessary) replacement of existing poles along the existing overhead electricity line, minor ground works e.g.

	replacement or installation of stays, and maintenance or improvement works]; and all associated ancillary works including the provision of temporary accessways. Replacement poles will be constructed at, or immediately adjacent to, the existing structures that they will replace. (Planning Ref: 23/60507) - Granted Permission to 1) demolish the remnants of a fire damaged dwelling and to build new replacement dwelling house, 2) replace existing septic tank and percolation area with new treatment system and polishing filter, 3) alterations to existing site entrance as well as all ancillary site works. Gross floor space of proposed works 113 sqm; Gross floor space of any demolition 153sqm (Planning Ref: 20/352) - Granted Permission to 1) demolish the remnants of a fire damaged dwelling and to build new replacement dwelling house, 2) replace existing septic tank and percolation area with new treatment system and polishing filter, 3) alterations to existing site entrance as well as all ancillary site works. Gross floor space of proposed works 113 sqm; Gross floor space of any demolition 153sqm. (Planning ref. no.:25/352) - Granted Extension of duration to 1) demolish the remnants of a fire damaged dwelling and to build new replacement dwelling house, 2) replace existing septic tank and percolation area with new treatment system and polishing filter, 3) alterations to existing site entrance as well as all ancillary site works (Planning Ref: 25/59) - Granted
Housing	Galway county exhibits a dispersed housing pattern with many holiday homes in the area, many with their own individual sewage treatment and water abstraction. This has the potential to negatively impact water quality due to the accumulation of individual sewage treatment systems. Habitat fragmentation is also a potential impact.
Agriculture	Agricultural land uses in the area primarily consist of low-intensity grazing of cows and ponies, and associated

	herbicide and pesticide use, as well as land fertilisation and drainage.
Tourism	There is a golf course present in Slyne Head Peninsula which attracts tourists for recreational use. Tourism has the potential to put pressure on the catchment due to increased water usage.

5.6 Cumulative assessment conclusion

Agricultural practices in the area are not excessive and have remained low intensity due to the low-quality agricultural attributes of much of the land. No significant negative impact is anticipated. The dispersed housing developments and holiday homes in the area, and associated water use are the largest threat the ecological integrity of the SAC. This development has not contributed to this threat.

The described works have not made the shed habitable, with its only purpose being for storage of materials and drying of herbs. The shed is not fitted with electricity or plumbing connections. No wastewater treatment system is associated with the development. As such, the works have not contributed to the described water use in the area.

The proposed project has been assessed, both individually and in conjunction with the combining effects of other plans and projects in the area. It is assessed that the works have not resulted in any significant residual effects on any ecological receptors or Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, there is no potential for the proposal to contribute to any potential cumulative impacts, when considered in combination with other developments in the locality. No cumulative impact is identified.

6.0 Conclusion

Upon examination of the potential effects of the proposed project on Natura 2000 sites and exploration of pathway receptor links pertaining to species and habitats, it can be concluded that, no significant negative effects on the Natura 2000 network were identified to have resulted from the completed works as described in Section 2.

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-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.

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Site Synopses

Site Name: Slyne Head Peninsula SAC

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

[1349] Bottle-nosed Dolphin (Tursiops truncatus)

[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 fasclatum* 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 pavonina* 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 aquatic*um), 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 Spike- rush (*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*), Tormentil (*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*).

Marine waters within the site, including Mannin Bay, support one or more groups of Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) that are part of a population inhabiting the west and north coasts of Connacht and which numbers at least 177-337 dolphins. This species is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Group sizes of up to 28 individual dolphins have been recorded within the site and sighting records have predominantly occurred in the summer months. Juvenile dolphins have been recorded within observed groups and a range of behaviours have been documented within the site including foraging and social behaviour.

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*. The site is also of marine conservation importance due to the occurrence of groups of Bottlenose Dolphin, a species listed on Annex II of the Directive.