Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Proposed 3no. Pumping Stations for Hartley Cartown Sewerage Scheme, Carrick – On - Shannon, Co. Leitrim

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# INTRODUCTION

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1 Introduction

This report is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the Proposed Hartley Cartown Sewerage Scheme, Carrick-on-shannon, Co. Leitrim, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and the requirements of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2018.
1.1 The Appropriate Assessment Process

Requirement for an Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive

The requirement for an Appropriate Assessment is set out in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The aim of the European Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) is to create a network of protected wildlife sites in Europe, maintained at a good conservation status. The network of sites is referred to as Natura 2000 sites. In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SAC’s, including candidate SACs), and Special Protection Areas (SPA’s, including proposed SPA’S). SACs are selected for the conservation of vulnerable and threatened habitat types and species (other than birds). SPA’s are selected for the conservation of vulnerable and threatened species of birds and other regularly occurring migratory birds, and their habitats.

The European Habitats Directive (EHD) (Council of the European Communities 1992) was transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997. The Directive specifies the scientific criteria on the basis of which Natura 2000 sites must be selected and sets out various procedures and obligations in relation to the nature conservation management which must be undertaken for the purpose of ensuring the protection of the Natura 2000 sites.

Stages in the Process

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive provides a strict assessment procedure for any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but which has the potential to have implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. The proposed project, therefore, falls under the remit of Article 6.

According to the European Commission’s guidance document, it has become generally accepted that the assessment requirements of Article 6 establish a stage by stage approach. The stages proposed by the guidance document are:

- **Stage One: Screening**
  The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant

- **Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment**
  The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site’s structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.
• **Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions**
The processes which examine alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

• **Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain**
An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed. This report documents the first of these stages. It examines the likely effects of the proposed sewerage scheme on any Natura 2000 sites affected by the project and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these sites will not be significantly impacted. The format of the following assessment is derived from the European Commission’s 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” (2002).
2 Assessment Criteria/Screening Matrix

2.1 Description of the Project

Leitrim County Council is currently preparing a design for the provision of a new Sewerage Scheme in the townlands of Hartley and Cartown in Carrick-on-Shannon. This sewerage scheme will connect 47 no. Houses located at Hartley and Cartown to the public sewerage network in Carrick-on-Shannon. The scheme would discharge to the Carrick on Shannon Waste Water Treatment Plant which has recently been upgraded under a Design Build Operate contract and has sufficient capacity to deal with the extra loading. The proposed works are due to commence in the third quarter of 2018.

These works will involve the following:

- Installation of 2540m of gravity sewer and 1680m of pumped rising main
- Construction of 3no. pumping stations
- Re-surfacing and road markings along the route of the works

This project is in compliance with the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan (2015 – 2021) and in particular with:

4.11.2.1 Municipal Waste Water Treatment Systems

Policy 119 - It is the policy of the Council, during the period of this plan, to seek the provision by Irish Water of waste water treatment facilities of adequate capacity and treatment standards in the County’s towns and villages in accordance with the Water Framework Directive 2000 and EU Urban Wastewater Directive

Objective 118

It is an objective of the Council to seek to remedy the risk of environmental damage from existing septic tanks and stand alone treatment systems at properties on the periphery of towns and villages by seeking the extension of the existing public sewer networks to service these properties.

Under article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment of plans or projects may be necessary, with respect to ecological implications of any project whether within or outside a designated site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site, but may impact upon it’s conservation objectives.

Thus, the purpose of this screening report is to consider whether, based on best scientific knowledge, this project will have potential impacts upon the conservation objectives of any Natura sites, and if so, the development where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects.

Natura Sites refer to Special Areas of Conservation (SAC’s) designated under the Habitat’s directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA’s) designated under the Bird’s Directive. These sites are protected habitats of Flora and Fauns of European importance.
It is the policy of Leitrim County Council to take appropriate steps to avoid, in these areas, the deterioration of natural habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as the disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of the Habitat’s Directive, 92/43/EEC Directive.

Following this screening, if it is found that this project may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, then an Appropriate Assessment of the Project must be carried out.

2.2 Natura Sites
Natura Sites are protected habitats for Flora and Fauna of European importance. They comprise of SAC’s and SPA’s. Site Synopsis in respect to SAC’s and SPA’s relevant to the Hartley / Cartown area are included in this report.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC’s)
These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) lists certain habitats and species that must be protected. SAC Sites are legally protected under the Habitats Directive and EC Regulations. The nearest SAC is Lough Arrow Complex SAC (No 001673) and is located greater than 15km radius from the project in Counties Roscommon & Sligo.

Special Protected Areas (SPA’s)
These sites are areas of importance for birds (and often are also important for other types of wildlife). The EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) requires designation of SPA’s for listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year. Any development in, near or adversely affecting an SPA should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. SPA’s were given effect in Irish Law mainly under the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations 1985 (SI. 291 of 1985). The nearest SPA is Lough Arrow Complex SPA (No 004050) and is located greater than 15km radius from the project in Counties Roscommon & Sligo.

Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
The proposed natural heritage area along the Shannon at Lough Drumharlow is approx 300m from the project locations and is not affected by the works.
MAP No.1 – Map of Area

LOUGH ARROW
SPA & SAC

PROJECT LOCATION

LOUGH DRUMHARLOW - PROPOSED NATURAL HERITAGE AREA
2.3 Assessment Criteria

Describe the individual elements of this project that have potential for having significant effects on the Natura site.

The proposed project’s nearest SAC is Lough Arrow Complex SAC (No 001673) and is located greater than 15km radius from the works. Environmental and ecological best practice as outlined in the National Roads Authority publications and guidelines will be adhered to at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the Guidelines for the Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Scrub (NRA (2006)), Guidelines on the Management of Noxious Weeds and Non Invasive Plant Species (NRA, 2010), with regard to the protection of riparian and wetland vegetation and habitats.

- **Removal of Mature Trees**

It is hoped that the pipeline alignment will avoid the removal of any mature trees or the disturbance of the roots of trees during construction works. The standard procedure to follow is to avoid any works beyond the area of the drip-point of the canopy of the tree in question, if possible. The working area along tree lines or around individual trees shall be kept to a minimum to reduce the area or length of sites or habitats that may be affected. Trees being retained at the margins of way leaves shall be temporarily fenced or at least identified by tape to avoid accidental collisions from construction machinery. The working area shall be defined at the outset by the erection of fencing to define the limits of site works. The number of trees to be removed will be minimised to ensure the impact of the works is not significant. Any tree species which will be removed to facilitate the works will be replaced with similar species.

- **Removal of Hedgerows**

The majority of the pipeline sections are parallel to hedgerows. There will be no disturbance to these roadside field boundaries. It may be necessary to remove short sections of hedgerow where the pipeline crosses into the field from the public road and/or at individual field boundaries. This will be minimized as far as possible by utilizing existing gates or natural gaps. During hedgerow removal, strict attention shall be given to the removal of only what is absolutely necessary. Sections to be removed shall be carefully measured and marked prior to the arrival of construction machinery. When excavating trenches parallel to hedgerows, these shall be at least to the edge of the drip-point of the hedge canopy to avoid root disturbance, if possible. Sections of hedgerows to be removed shall be reinstated following construction works with native species.
**Installation of Pipelines**

The works are to be carried on the road and in fields. The works will be carried out by excavating a trench to the required levels and pipelaying accordingly. The road trench will be backfilled with crushed stone and the road reinstated to its original condition. The field excavations for the pumping stations will be carried out during good weather conditions to ensure minimum disturbance to the area, soil shall be stored on site and used to reinstate the trenches once completed. The trenches in the vicinity of the pumping stations will be backfilled with suitable material compliant with specification and reinstated to their original condition. It is envisaged that the project will last approx. twenty four weeks.

All spoil will be taken off-site to a waste permitted facility in a timely manner in order to reduce any potential for silt run off, thereby avoiding any significant impact on the area. Material and top soil storage areas will be cordoned off, stabilised and away from any watercourse or drain to prevent the possible entry of suspended solids to the river.
• **Construction of Pumping Stations**

The plan dimensions of the pumping station site boundaries will be approx. 15m x 15m. The site boundary will be secured by 2m high palisade fencing. There will be shrubs planted around the site boundary to minimize the visual impact of the pumping station.
Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site

The nearest Natura 2000 site is located greater than 15km radius from the project and will not be impacted on.

Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Water Supply

Water supply in the Hartley Cartown area is provided via the Carrick-on-Shannon Regional Water Supply Scheme treatment plant, which is located in Carrick-on-Shannon and abstracts water from the river Shannon. Treatment at the plant consists of coagulation (with alum and poly), dissolved air flotation, rapid gravity filtration, chlorination and fluoridation. The water quality provided is deemed to be good. It is not considered that the works will impact on this water supply.

Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Emissions and waste

As described previously, any waste material generated by the works will be taken off-site to a waste permitted facility in a timely manner in order to reduce any potential for silt run off, thereby avoiding any significant impact on the area. Material and top soil storage areas will be cordoned off and stabilised away from any watercourse or drain to prevent the possible entry of suspended solids to the river.

Due to the small-scale nature of this project, the emissions produced by vehicles/machinery involved in the construction work are deemed not to be significant.

Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of excavation requirements for this project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)

The volume of excavated material for the works is estimated to be approximately 6,000 tonnes in total. Waste material will be gravel, sub soil and top soil. All spoil will be taken off-site to a waste permitted facility in a timely manner in order to reduce any potential for silt run off, thereby avoiding any significant impact on the area.
Describe any likely changes to the Natura site arising as a result of reduction of the Habitat

The nearest Natura site is located greater than 15km radius from the project and will not be impacted on.

Describe any Habitat or Species Fragmentation as a result of this project

Any impacts or disturbance as a result of the pipeline installation works are considered temporary and a rapid re-colonisation of any reinstated hedgerows will occur.

Describe any Disturbance to Key Species as a result of this project

The main concern regarding species relates to the retention of the existing trees and other vegetation within the hedgerows. These issues do not arise in relation to subsurface works within the confines of the public road. The locations for the pumping stations are contained within grassland fields and the respective landowners have agreed to relinquish ownership of the required area. These locations show no evidence of badger sets within the lands. There is no evidence of nesting or roosting of any fauna within these areas.

Describe any reduction of Species Density as a result of this project

Due to the small-scale nature of the project, there is likely to be a negligible reduction in Species Density.

Describe any impact on Climate Change

The provision of the proposed sewerage scheme will facilitate a direct decrease in the requirement for attendance and maintenance to existing septic tanks and stand alone treatment systems. This in turn, will result in a reduction in the carbon footprint, thereby providing a positive contribution to Climate Change.

Describe any likely impacts on the Natura site in terms of the key relationship that define the structure of the site

The nearest Natura site is located greater than 15km radius from the project and will not be impacted on.
Describe any likely impacts on the Natura site in terms of the key relationship that define the function of the site

The nearest Natura site is located greater than 15km radius from the project and will not be impacted on.

3 Finding of no Significant Effects Report

Having considered the scale of the proposed project and its location in relation to Natura 2000 sites in the area, it is considered that the proposed project will not have any significant impact on habitats or species within any nearby Natura 2000 site or the integrity of these sites as a whole. Therefore there is no requirement to complete a full Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment.

4 Data Collection

This assessment was carried out by members of Leitrim County Council Design Office. In order to acquire information on the existing environment, a number of site inspections were undertaken. Following completion of the assessment, the draft report was reviewed by the Planning Department in advance of the proposed Part VIII application being placed on public display.