



# Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

Father Russell Road Cycling  
Facilities, Limerick

DEC Ltd.

August 2021

## Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment

### Cycling Facilities at Father Russell Road, Limerick

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This report has been prepared by Doherty Environmental Consultants Ltd. with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information report herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Doherty Environmental Consultants (DEC) Ltd. have been commissioned by the Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) to undertake a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for proposed cycling facilities on the L-1429 Father Russell Road, Limerick City.

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment forms Stage 1 of the Habitats Directive Assessment process and is being undertaken in order to comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3). The function of this Screening Report is to determine if it can or cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European Site. This Screening Report has been prepared to provide information to the competent authority to assist them in their determination as to whether a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for the project.

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment is being prepared in order to enable the competent authority to comply with Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive). It is prepared to assess whether or not the project alone or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on any European Site in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European Sites and specifically on the habitats and species for which the sites have been designated.

#### ***1.1.1 Requirement for an Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive***

According to Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 – 2015, the competent authority has a duty to:

Determine whether the proposed Project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of one of more European Sites; and, if not;

Determine if the Project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on the European Site(s) in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the site(s).

This Report contains a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and is intended to assess and address all issues regarding the construction and operation of the Project and to inform and allow the competent authority to comply with the Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive defines the requirements for assessment of projects and plans for which likely significant effects on European Sites may arise. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 – 2015 (the Habitats Regulations) transpose into Irish law Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) lists habitats and species that are of international importance for conservation and require protection. The Habitats legislation requires competent authorities, to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects that, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have significant effects on European Sites in view of best scientific knowledge and the Site’s conservation objectives. This requirement is transposed into Irish Law by Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

## **1.2 STAGE 1 SCREENING METHOD**

The purpose of a Stage 1 screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment is to determine whether it is necessary to carry out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the implications for a European site of a project. The trigger for the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment is that the project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is “likely to have a significant effect” on the European site.

It is clear that the trigger for an Appropriate Assessment is a very light one, and that the mere probability or a risk that a project might have a significant effect is sufficient to require an Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken. Under Part XAB of the 2000

Act, screening for Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the competent authority.

Section 177U provides:

*A screening for appropriate assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if... a proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.*

Accordingly, the competent authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a proposed development is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. The competent authority's determination as to whether an Appropriate Assessment is required must be made on the basis of objective information and must be recorded.

Whereupon the carrying out of a Stage One screening, it is determined by the competent authority that a Stage Two Appropriate Assessment is required, an applicant for permission must prepare and submit a Natura Impact Statement to the competent authority.

This Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in compliance with the provisions of section 177U of the 2000 Act.

The nature of the likely interactions between a project and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites will depend upon the:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change; *and/or*

- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts arising from land use activities associated with the plan, in combination with other plans and projects.

The European Commission Guidelines (2001) outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening assessment of a plan or project that has the potential to have likely significant effects on European Sites. The methodology adopted for the screening of this project is informed by these guidelines, as well as the Irish guidance identified above, and was undertaken in the following stages:

- A brief description of the proposed SHD is provided and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
- Identification of European Sites occurring within the zone of influence of the proposed SHD;
- Identification of potential likely significant effects on European Sites; and
- Identification of other plans or projects that, in combination with the proposed SHD, have the potential to affect European Sites.

There is absolutely no reliance placed in this AASR on (a) measures intended to avoid/reduce harmful effects on the European sites, (b) construction management/best practice measures, or (c) any other measures (such as SUDS) which are proposed with no relation to the *intention* of avoiding or reducing any potentially harmful effect of the development on any European site.



This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken with reference to respective National and European guidance documents:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities (DEHLG 2010) and Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and recent European and National case law.

The following guidance documents were also of relevance during the preparation of this Screening Report:

- A guide for competent authorities. Environment and Heritage Service, Sept 2002. Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010). DEHLG.
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/42/EEC. European Commission (2001).
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2018).
- OPR PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (2021)

The EC (2001) guidelines outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for projects. The methodology adopted during the preparation of this Screening Report is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

1. Describe the project and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
2. Identify European Sites that could be influenced by the project;
3. Where European Sites are identified as occurring within the zone of influence of the project identify potential effects arising from the project and screen the potential for such effects to negatively affect European Sites identified under Point 2 above; and
4. Identify other plans or projects that, in combination with the project, have the potential to affect European Sites.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The overall Father Russell Road Cycle Lanes Scheme is described as follows:

*The proposed scheme will provide high-quality cycling facilities on sections of the L-1429 Father Russell Road in the south Limerick environs. The provision of the cycling facilities will involve an upgrade of the current road corridor to accommodate pedestrian, cycling and vehicular provisions. This will be achieved by re-construction of the existing footpaths, construction of cycle tracks/lanes and narrowing of the existing road carriageway. Land acquisition is required at the Racefield Centre to accommodate the proposed upgrade works.*

Figure 2.1 shows the broader location of the proposed site area and Figure 2.2 shows a higher resolution aerial image of the proposed site boundary of Father Russell Road.

Figure 2.1 Location of the site

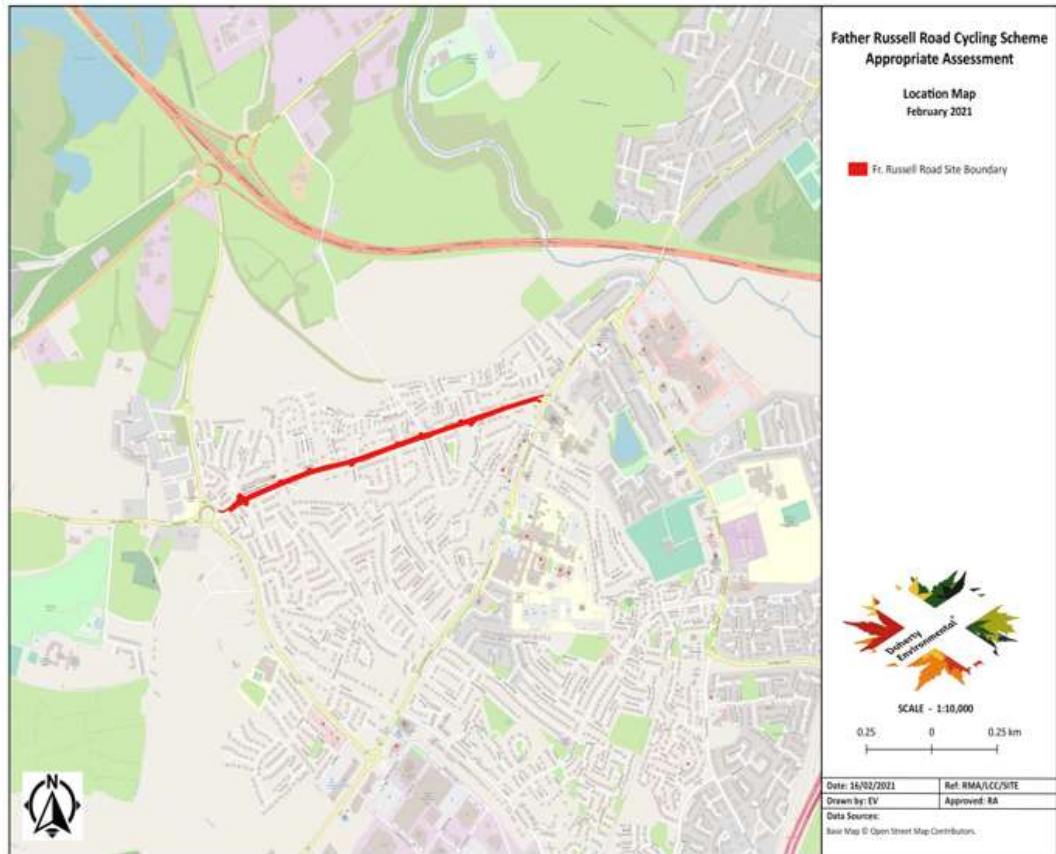
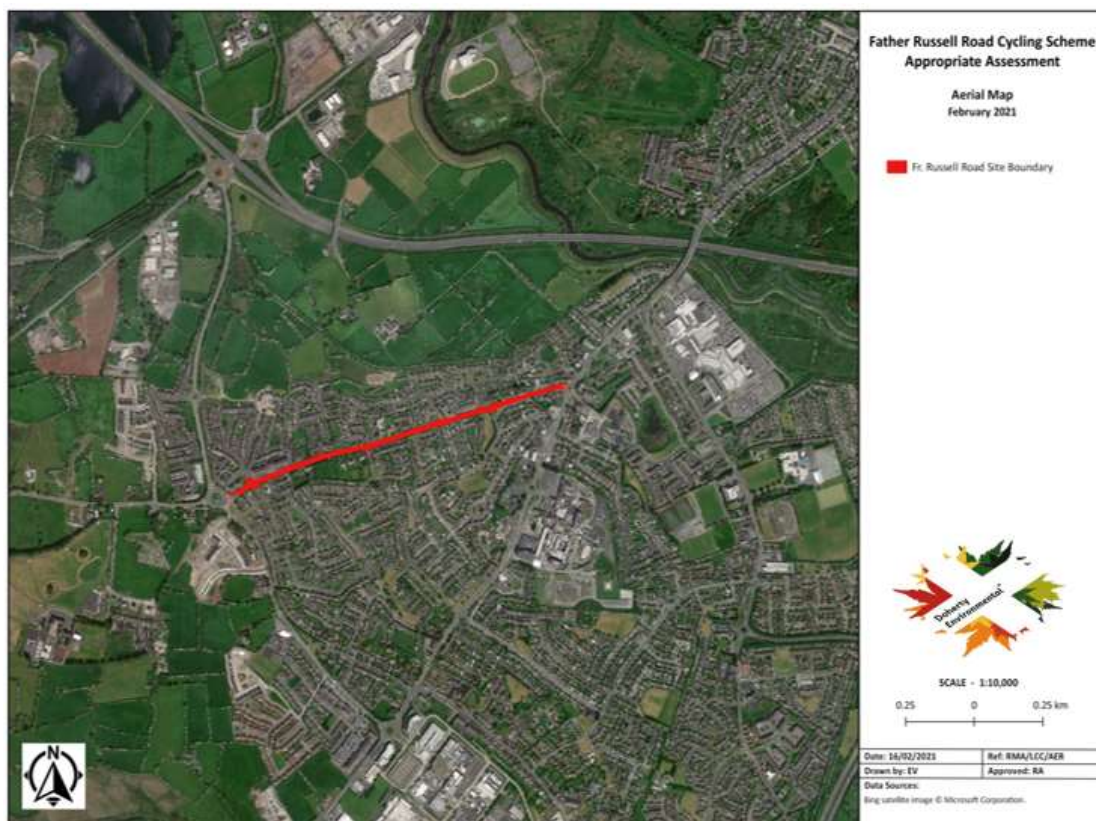


Figure 2.2 Aerial View of the Site Boundary



The design has been developed to achieve the following objectives:

- To improve safety, comfort and security for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists;
- To provide off-road cycle lanes;
- To provide improve cycle and pedestrian crossing facilities at the Racefield shopping centre junction;
- To improve the crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists;
- To tie into Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS);
- To provide junction solutions in line with the Principles of Sustainable Safety, that meets with the five needs of cyclists and the target Quality of Services outlined in the National Cycle Manual (NCM);

- To design a facility that complies with the National Cycle Manual published by the National Transport Authority and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and any other relevant guidelines

The development is to be carried out in the townlands of Ballykeeffe and Gouldavoher, Limerick. The primary deliverables for the project are the provision of cycle facilities to the National Cycle Manual incorporating improvements to crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly at junctions. It is proposed to provide segregated cycle facilities on both sides of the road where feasible with a minimum clear cycle track width of 1550mm. The cycle track will be separated from the road carriageway by a 200mm wide upstand kerb. The scheme will also include modifications to the footpath widths with a minimum footpath width of 1800mm proposed. Other elements to be delivered in conjunction with the above include junction improvements as required, works to bus lanes/stops, pedestrian facilities with associated modification to drainage, line markings and signage etc.

### **3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT SITE**

The habitats present on the immediate site are as follows: are reflective of the urban land-use and are classified as Built Land and Artificial Surfaces (BL3), with a narrow strip of amenity grassland and occasional semi-mature tree planting.

As noted above the footprint of the proposed site consists of 20<sup>th</sup> Century sub-urban landscape. The Corine 2018 classifies the site as a ‘discontinuous urban fabric’.

#### **3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The Scheme is located in the greater Raheen / Dooradoyle area which is a large residential area in the Southwest of Limerick City with a number of local schools and employers in the locality. University Hospital Limerick is located on the R526 to the south of the Scheme. The Crescent Shopping Centre is situated off the R926 adjacent to Ballykeeffe Roundabout and is adjacent to Limerick City & County Council’s County Hall building and library.

In accordance with Part XI of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 (as amended) and Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Limerick City & County Council proposes to carry of the following development:

- Construction of dedicated cycle track/lane facilities on both sides of the L-1429 Father Russell Road over an approximate length of 1000m between the tie in with the existing cycle facilities at Quinns Cross Roundabout on the R510 and the Gouldavoher junction;
- Re-construction of approximately 1000m of the L-1429 Father Russell Road with a minimum carriageway width of 6m to be provided;
- Re-construction of pedestrian footpaths on both sides of the L-1429 Father Russell Road over an approximate length of 1000m;

- Re-construction of a section of the boundary wall to the Racefield Shopping Centre along with amendments to the pedestrian access arrangements to the Centre from the public footpath;
- Re-construction of existing bus stop facilities including the provision of an offline bus stop opposite Belvedere Court;
- Upgrade of existing controlled pedestrian crossing adjacent Russell Court to a controlled toucan crossing;
- Installation of traffic calming measures on the L-1429 Father Russell Road to include raised zebra crossings on the 4 arms of the Racefield Roundabout, a raised zebra crossing adjacent to the entrance to Ballinvoher, a raised uncontrolled pedestrian crossing adjacent to the entrance to Mount Russell and upgrades to existing junction arrangements to side roads off the L-1429 Father Russell Road with raised pedestrian crossings at certain junctions;
- Installation of LED public lighting, surface water sewers, foul sewers, water mains, gas mains and further utility services where required;

The proposed cycle facilities for the most part will be segregated from vehicular traffic through the provision of a segregation kerb and raised cycle tracks.

#### **3.2.1.1 Duration of works.**

Works to Father Russell Road will include the construction of the segregated cycle facilities on both sides of the road separated from the road carriageway by a 200mm wide upstand kerb. The scheme will also include modifications to the existing road and footpaths. Other elements to be delivered in conjunction with the above include junction improvements as required, works to bus lanes/stops, pedestrian facilities with associated modification to drainage, line markings and signage etc. The works are to be carried out over a 1 km length of the existing roadway.

It is estimated that the works will take up to 12 months to complete.

### **3.2.1.2 Approach to works.**

It is likely that the works would be completed in a number of phases to allow for access to existing properties and side roads and also to facilitate pedestrian access. The phasing would include the completion of the footpath re-construction / cycle track construction on one side of the road and re-construction of half the roadway along with services works to allow for traffic to be moved to the 2nd half of the road with stop/go traffic management employed. Following the re-construction of one side of the road, traffic access will be moved to the completed section to allow for the footpath re-construction / cycle track construction on one side of the road and re-construction of half the roadway along with services works on the remaining half of the road.

### **3.2.1.3 Location of works**

Site management offices are likely to be remote from the project site.

### **3.2.1.4 Anticipated machinery and staff**

- 20-tonne excavator
- rubber-tyred excavators, 6-tonne JCB
- 3-tonne mini diggers
- 30-tonne dump truck
- 6-tonne dumpers
- 7.5-tonne multi-purpose truck
- 20-tonne and 30-tonne delivery trucks
- teleporter
- site vehicles



- compactor plates
- 6-tonne vibrating rollers
- paving machines
- bitumen boiler
- oil tanker/sprayer
- road planning machine
- road saws
- air compressors
- jack-hammers
- traffic management signage, cones and barriers
- herras fencing
- road sweeper

The materials required for the works will be typical civil engineering road construction materials consisting of cement, gravels, aggregates, capping stone, block pavements, precast concrete kerbs, in-situ concrete kerbs and footpaths, precast concrete manholes, covers, plastic ducting, galvanised/cast iron chamber covers, powder-coated street lighting columns and traffic signal poles, LED lighting and traffic signals, galvanised steel signage poles, metal traffic signs etc.

The site personnel would be up to 20-30 persons.

#### **4.0 IS THE PROJECT NECESSARY FOR THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OF EUROPEAN SITES?**

The project has been described in Section 3 of the Screening Report and it is clear from the description provided that the project is not directly connected with or necessary for the future conservation management of any European Sites.

## **5.0 EUROPEAN SITES OCCURRING WITHIN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PROJECT**

Current guidance (OPR, 2021) informing the approach to screening for Appropriate Assessment defines the zone of influence of a proposed development as the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. It is recommended that this is established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor (SPR) framework.

As a first step in identifying the European Sites that could be connected to the project via SPR pathways, all European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area (15km) that could be conceivably connected to the project were identified. As can be seen in Figures 5.1 and Figure 5.2 two European Sites, comprising the Lower River Shannon SAC and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA which overlap with each other in close proximity and upstream from the project site. There is no official requirement for a buffer zone of 15km, however, it is in line with good practice and is shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 for spatial context.

The project site is located within the Shannon Estuary South catchment. Therefore, the potential for a connection between the project site and these European Sites requires further examination. All other European Sites are located at a remote distance from the project site and are not connected to it via any SPR pathways and such are excluded from further examination.

Figure 5.1 SACs within 15 km from the proposed site

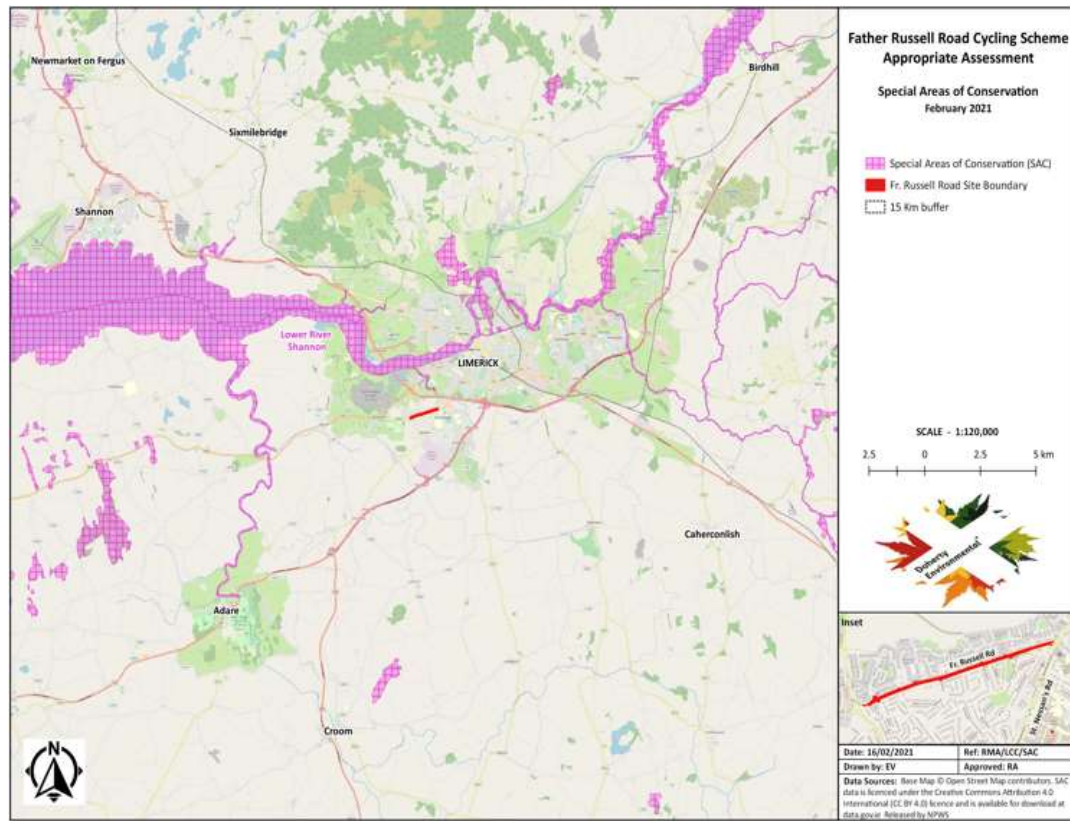
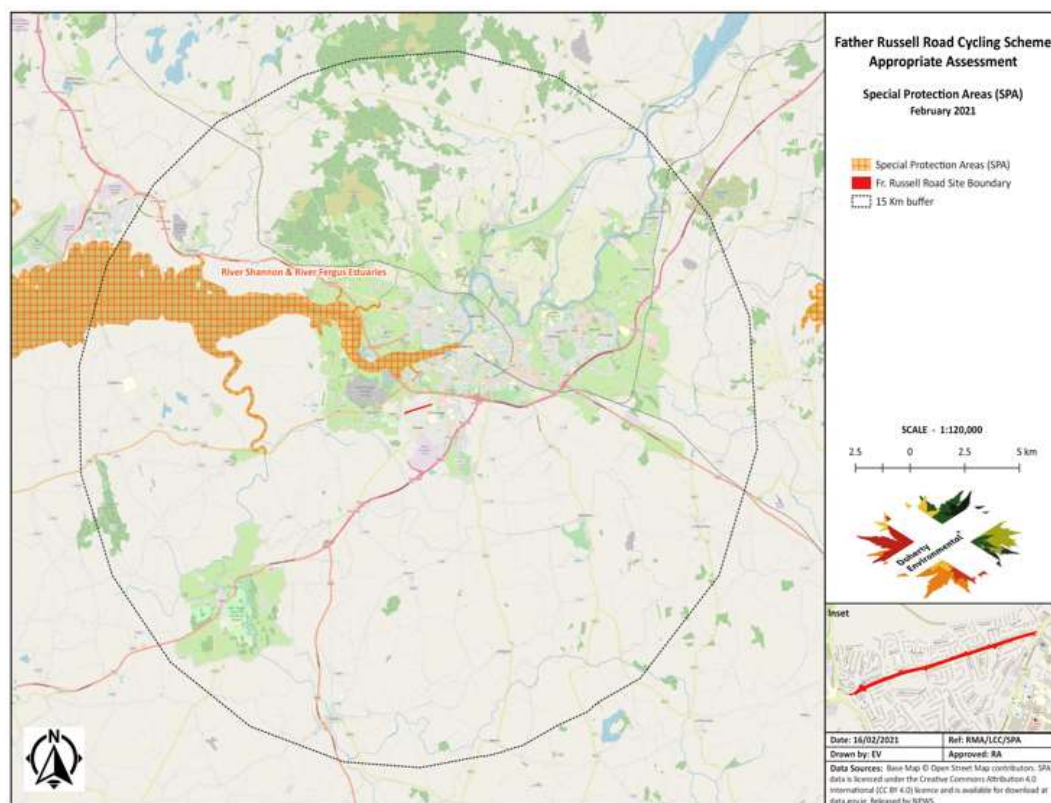


Figure 5.2 SPAs within 15 km from the proposed site



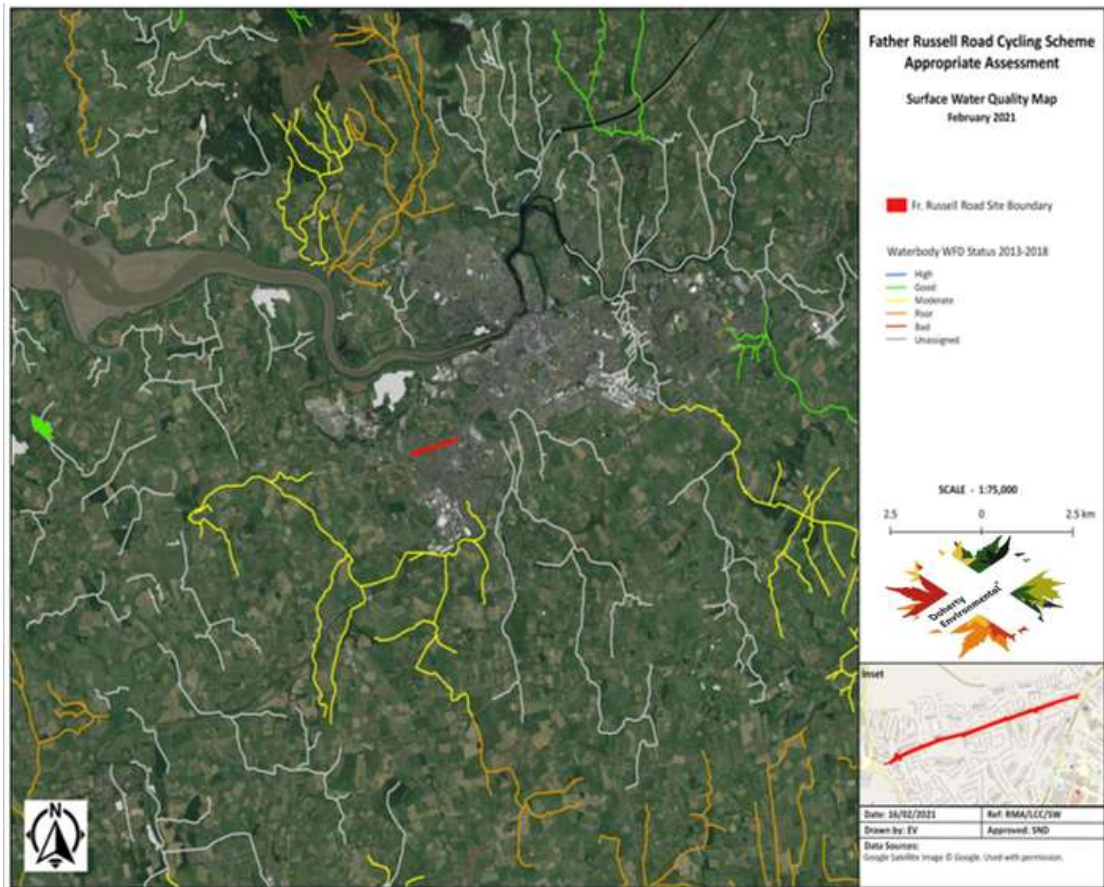
Under the SPR model the project, as described above, represents the source. Potential impact pathways are restricted to hydrological pathways. While it is noted that the urban renewal project will involve the construction of cycle tracks and reconstruction of existing road and pedestrian footpaths no significant aerial emissions are predicted to arise as a result of this activity. Given the small scale of the construction works required and the distance to the nearest European Sites (i.e. approximately 0.72km) no functional aerial emissions pathway is considered to connect the project to any European Sites. This is supported by the guidance outlined by Holman et al. (2014) which advises that ecological features that are sensitive to dust emissions are likely to be impacted with a zone of 0 to 500m. Other pathways that can typically function as impact pathways to sensitive ecological receptors such as noise, disturbance through the presence of humans is also not considered relevant given the significant distance between the project site and the nearest European Sites.

The receptors represent European Sites and their associated qualifying features of interest. European Sites and their associated qualifying features are likely to occur in the zone of influence of the project only where the above pathways establish a link between the study area and European Sites or where the project site is likely to play an important role in supporting populations of mobile species that are listed as special conservation interests/qualifying species for surrounding European Sites.

With regard to potential impact pathways, it is considered that a potential impact pathway linking the project to European Sites relates to hydrological pathways. In this instance, the nearest surface water stream is the transitional waterbody of Limerick Dock (IE\_SH\_060\_0900) occurring approximately 0.65km to the north-west of the proposed site. It flows upstream into the above-mentioned two overlapping European Sites. The potential surface water will likely flow or drain post rainfall into Limerick Dock that flows into Lower Shannon SAC through the existing drainage systems.

The surrounding surface water hydrology along with the water quality status with respect to the proposed site is shown in Figure 5.3. Limerick Dock falls under the WFD catchments of Shannon Estuary South and Lower Shannon and the subcatchment of Ballynaclogh\_SC\_010 that is under review due to its unassigned status.

Figure 5.3 Local surface water hydrology surrounding the proposed site



No potential for a wastewater pathway will arise during the construction phase given that all wastewater generated during the construction phase by site operative will be directed to the existing foul sewers. Additionally, new foul sewers will be installed if required as a part of the development. The project will not result in the generation of wastewater during the operation phase.

No other pathways such as air, noise or visual disturbance pathways are considered relevant due to the distance of over 0.72 km separating the project site from the nearest European Site. The potential for a mobile species pathway (i.e., where mobile species could be supported by the project site) is also not considered to represent a

relevant pathway due to the absence of any suitable habitat for these species occurring at the project site (urban environment).

**Table 5.1: Identification of European Sites occurring within the Zone of Influence of the Project**

European Sites	Distance from Project Site (km)	Is there a Hydrological/Emission Pathway between the Project Site and European Sites?	Risks to Qualifying Habitats	Risk to Qualifying Mobile Species	Do European Sites occur within the Projects Zone of Influence?
Lower River Shannon SAC	0.727	Given that the project site is located within the Shannon catchment further examination of the potential for a hydrological pathway to connect the project site to this SAC is provided in Section 6 below.	No	No	Yes. The project site is located within the Shannon Estuary North Catchment and the Fergus sub-catchment.
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	01.41	Given that the project site is located within the Shannon catchment further examination of the potential for a hydrological pathway to connect the project site to this SAC is provided in Section 6 below.	No	No	Yes. The project site is located within the Shannon Estuary North Catchment and the Fergus sub-catchment.

Table 5.1 above examines the relationship between the project site and the European Sites occurring within the wider surrounding area. Aside from the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA all other European Sites are confirmed not to be located within the zone of influence of the project. The remainder of this Screening focuses on examining the potential for the project to result in likely significant effects to the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

## 6.0 OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN SITES

### 6.1 LOWER RIVER SHANNON SAC

The Lower River Shannon SAC is located approximately 0.727km to the north of the project site.

Lower River Shannon SAC is designated as a SAC for its role in supporting a range of qualifying habitats and species. This SAC is a very large site that stretches along the Shannon valley from Killaloe in Co. Clare to Loop Head/ Kerry Head, a distance of some 120 km. The site thus encompasses the Shannon, Feale, Mulkear and Fergus estuaries, the freshwater lower reaches of the River Shannon (between Killaloe and Limerick), the freshwater stretches of much of the Feale and Mulkear catchments and the marine area between Loop Head and Kerry Head. Rivers within the sub-catchment of the Feale include the Galey, Smearlagh, Oolagh, Allaughaun, Owveg, Clydagh, Caher, Breanagh and Glenacarne. Rivers within the sub-catchment of the Mulkear include the Killeenagariff, Annagh, Newport, the Dead River, the Bilboa, Glashacloonaraveela, Gortnageragh and Cahernahallia.

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):

- [1110] Sandbanks
- [1130] Estuaries
- [1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats
- [1150] Coastal Lagoons\*
- [1160] Large Shallow Inlets and Bays
- [1170] Reefs
- [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks
- [1230] Vegetated Sea Cliffs
- [1310] *Salicornia* Mud
- [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
- [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
- [3260] Vegetation of flowing waters
- [6410] *Molinia* Meadows



[91E0] Alluvial Forests\*

[1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)

[1095] Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*)

[1096] Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*)

[1099] River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*)

[1106] Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)

[1349] Bottle-nosed Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

[1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

As noted in Table 5.1 above all qualifying habitats, of this SAC with the exception of vegetation of flow waters are located at a remote distance from the project site and are not connected to the project via any impact pathways. In light of this, the remainder of this screening will focus on examining the potential for the project to result in likely significant effects on the status of this habitat.

In addition, the only qualifying species identified as occurring within the zone of influence of the project are those that are supported by freshwater lotic habitat and that is hydrologically connected to the project. These species are lamprey species, Atlantic salmon and otter.

## 6.2 RIVER SHANNON AND RIVER FERGUS ESTUARIES SPA

The estuaries of the River Shannon and River Fergus form the largest estuarine complex in Ireland. The site has vast expanses of intertidal flats supporting invertebrate and vegetation communities that provide ideal foraging habitat for a range of wetland bird species. It is the most important coastal wetland site in the country and regularly supports in excess of 50,000 wintering waterfowl. The site has been selected as a SPA for its role in supporting populations of the following species:

- Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017]
- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038]
- Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046]
- Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048]
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]

- Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052]
- Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054]
- Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056]
- Scaup (*Aythya marila*) [A062]
- Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) [A137]
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]
- Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141]
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]
- Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143]
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149]
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156]
- Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157]
- Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160]
- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162]
- Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) [A164]
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]

### **6.3 DOCUMENTED THREATS & PRESSURES TO LOWER RIVER SHANNON SAC& THE RIVER SHANNON AND RIVER FERGUS ESTUARIES SPA**

The threats and pressures to this SAC and SPA have been documented in the Standard Natura 2000 Data Form for the site (NPWS, 2012a & b). The documented threats and pressures to these sites are as follows:

Fertilisation: The source of pollution is assumed to be linked to the agricultural improvement referred to in the SAC Site Synopsis.

Urbanisation, human habitation: this threat relates to existing and proposed urbanized areas located within or immediately adjacent to the SAC/SPA.

Air pollution: Associated with existing and proposed human activities in the vicinity of the SAC/SPA.

Discharges: Associated with existing and proposed discharges from both point and diffuse sources to watercourses draining to the SAC/SPA.

Eutrophication: Associated with existing and proposed point and diffuse sources discharging to the River Shannon.

Polderisation; and

Reclamation of land from sea, estuary and marsh.

Of the above threats and pressures, the only one considered to be of relevance to the project is “discharges”. This is due to the location of the project within the Shannon Estuary South Catchment.

#### 6.4 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The overall conservation objectives for the Lower River Shannon and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species/special conservation interest bird species for which the SAC/SPA has been selected.

Favourable conservation status of habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

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

Site-specific conservation objectives have been published for both the Lower River Shannon and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA and are available at:

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation\\_objectives/CO002165.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165.pdf)

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation\\_objectives/CO004077.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004077.pdf)

The key attributes for the conservation of the Annex 1 habitat vegetation of flowing waters are to maintain the extent of habitat area and distribution and the hydrological regime of watercourses supporting this habitat.

The key attributes for the conservation of otters are to maintain the extent of otter habitat and the distribution of otters within the SAC while also maintaining prey resources.

The key attributes for the conservation of Atlantic salmon and lamprey species within the SAC are to maintain the extent of suitable habitat for the various life stages of these species, avoid fragmentation of habitats and maintain water quality within the watercourses protected by the SAC.

The key attributes for the conservation of wetland bird species of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA are to maintain the population and distribution of these species within the SPA.

## **7.0 EXAMINATION OF EFFECTS**

### **7.1 EXAMINATION OF POTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION & OPERATION PHASE EFFECTS**

The consideration of how the project could result in likely significant effects to the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA relates to an examination of

the project's potential to result in contamination to receiving surface waters or groundwaters with consequent negative effects along the Limerick Dock upstream.

Activities associated with the project are not predicted to have the potential to result in adverse negative effects to the water quality of the Limerick Dock occurring to the northwest of the project site. The works will be located in a small area and low volumes of surface water runoff will be generated at the project site during both the construction and operation phases. Given the small scale of the site and its location on level ground, the surface water run-off volume that will be generated will be minuscule in the context of the overall runoff rates from the wider surrounding area into Limerick Dock catchment. Therefore, it will not have a perceptible impact on the water quality of the Limerick Dock.

Furthermore, it is noted that all surface water generated during the project will drain to existing surface water sewers. The project will also involve the installation of more surface water sewers if required. This combined with the above will ensure that the project will not have the potential to result in negative impacts to the water quality of the Limerick Dock and will not have the potential to negatively affect the status and conservation objectives of European Sites- Lower River Shannon SAC and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

## 8.0 EXAMINATION OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

A search of National Planning Viewer, the online planning applications website<sup>1</sup>, was completed to identify any other projects in the vicinity of the proposed project, with which this project could combine to result in cumulative negative impacts to the Limerick Dock and the close SAC and SPA upstream.

The following recent planning applications have been identified in the surrounding area:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://myplan.ie/national-planning-application-map-viewer/> (Accessed on 26/08/2021)

Planning Reference	Description of Development	Planning Status
<p><b>20339 (2020)</b> Mini Market, 154 Fr. Russell Rd., Ballykeeffe Co. Limerick.</p>	<p>(Retention) standalone launderette kiosk and all associated site work.</p>	<p>Conditional</p>
<p><b>19685 (2019)</b> 71 Russell Court, Ballykeeffe, Dooradoyle Co. Limerick.</p>	<p>(Permission) raising boundary wall by 0.45m and erect timber storage shed. Retention of a hard stand to the side of a dwelling.</p>	<p>Conditional</p>
<p><b>19582 (2019)</b> Russells, Racefield Centre Fr. Russell Rd. , Dooradoyle Co. Limerick</p>	<p>(Retention) the extension into an existing void area for use as storage space on the basement floor, closing up of the ope to Unit 1 at ground floor and use of space between Russell's and Unit 1, Racefield Centre, as an outdoor seating area with retractable canopies and all ancillary site works.</p>	<p>Conditional</p>
<p><b>18802 (2018)</b> Unit 1 Racefield Centre, Fr. Russell Road, Raheen Co. Limerick.</p>	<p>(Retention) the change of use from Off Licence to Veterinary Clinic and associated site works.</p>	<p>Conditional</p>
<p><b>18665 (2018)</b> Units 1 &amp; 6 Racefield Centre, Fr. Russell Road, Dooradoyle Co. Limerick</p>	<p>(Permission) proposed screen fencing with access gates to the perimeter of refrigeration unit and associated mechanical services installation to the rear of Unit 6 and all ancillary site works. Retention Permission is also sought for the existing refrigeration unit and associated mechanical services installation to the rear of Unit 6.</p>	<p>Conditional</p>

Planning Reference	Description of Development	Planning Status
<b>18664 (2018)</b> Units 1 & 6 Racefield Centre, Fr. Russell Road, Dooradoyle Co. Limerick.	(Retention) existing wall-mounted lighting to shopfronts on units 1 to 6 and existing wall-mounted projecting signs on units 1 and 6 and gable signage to unit 6 and all ancillary site works.	Conditional
<b>181255 (2018)</b> 71 Russell Court, Ballykeeffe, Dooradoyle Co. Limerick	(Retention) completion of sunroom extension and storage shed.	Conditional

None of the planning applications as listed here is significant in their scale and is not expected to give rise to any impacts on environmental resources. There and there will be, similarly, no predicted cumulative impacts in relation to environmental resources, for example in terms of habitat loss or disturbance to, protected species as a result of the proposed development or emissions to water or air arising from same.

Based on the above, and the given the examination of (in Section 6.1 above) of the project’s potential to combine with other discharges to result in negative impacts to the water quality of the Limerick Dock there will be no potential for the project to combine with other discharges to result in negative impacts to the water quality upstream within the Limerick Dock.

#### 9.0) SCREENING CONCLUSION

The proposed development is not likely to have any impact on Natura 2000 sites. As such it is concluded that there will be no potential for significant effects on European Sites and the requirement to undertake a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the project can be screened out.

During the preparation of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development of cycling facilities on sections of the L-1429 Father Russell Road in the south Limerick environs, it was found that two European Sites occurring in the wider area surrounding the project site required examination to establish whether or not they were at risk of experiencing likely

significant effects as a result of the project. These two European Sites are the Lower River Shannon SAC and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA. No other European Sites are connected to the project site via potential impact pathways and were therefore screened out at an early stage of the screening exercise.

The two European Sites were identified as requiring further examination by virtue of their location in the wider surrounding of the project site and the location of the project site within the Shannon Estuary South catchment, which is the same catchment as these two European Sites.

The potential for the Limerick Dock (transitional waterbody) to function as a hydrological impact pathway, linking the project to these European Sites was examined as part of this screening exercise. This examination was completed by considering all aspects of the proposed project that could result in the emission of potentially polluting material to the Limerick Dock draining lands close to the project.

This assessment found that the two European Sites occurring upstream of the project site are not deemed to be at risk of likely significant effects from the project due to:

The low volumes of water runoff discharging to the receiving Limerick Dock from the project site will facilitate dilution of any potentially polluting surface water runoff locally within the river;

The minor fraction of freshwater flows that the Limerick Dock contributes to the overall freshwater flows to the two European Sites. This minor ratio will facilitate thorough dilution of any potentially polluting surface water entering upstream at these European Sites; and

The known potential for freshwaters inputs to Limerick Dock to rapidly mix and assimilate pollutants such that there is no perceptible impact to the water quality of the two European Sites;

The absence of a functional surface water hydrological impact pathway between the project site and the two European Sites will ensure that the project will not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to the future conservation status of qualifying features of interest and special conservation interests for which these European Sites are designated and will not undermine the achievement of their site-specific conservation objectives.



In light of the findings of this report, it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded by Limerick City and County Council that the project is not likely, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives and on the basis of best scientific evidence and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to that conclusion.

## REFERENCES

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Shannon Estuary South Catchment Summary WFD Cycle 3 (catchments.ie)

## APPENDIX 1: QUALIFYING FEATURES OF INTEREST OF EUROPEAN SITES OCCURRING WITHIN THE WIDER SURROUNDING AREA

A total of 16 European Sites were identified as occurring within a 15km radius of the project site. Table A1.1 below lists the qualifying features of interest of each of these European Sites.

**Table A1.1: Qualifying Features of Interest European Sites occurring within a 15km radius and upstream of the Project**

European Sites	Qualifying Features Of Interest
Lower River Shannon SAC	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]
	Estuaries [1130]
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]
	Coastal lagoons [1150]
	Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]
	Reefs [1170]
	Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]
	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]
	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]
	Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> ) [1330]
	Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> ) [1410]
	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]
	<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils ( <i>Molinion caeruleae</i> ) [6410]
	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> ) [91E0]
	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]
	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]
<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	
<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]	
<i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]	
<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]	
<i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	

River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> ) [A017]
	Whooper Swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> ) [A038]
	Light-bellied Brent Goose ( <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> ) [A046]
	Shelduck ( <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> ) [A048]
	Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) [A050]
	Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) [A052]
	Pintail ( <i>Anas acuta</i> ) [A054]
	Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) [A056]
	Scaup ( <i>Aythya marila</i> ) [A062]
	Ringed Plover ( <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> ) [A137]
	Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) [A140]
	Grey Plover ( <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ) [A141]
	Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) [A142]
	Knot ( <i>Calidris canutus</i> ) [A143]
	Dunlin ( <i>Calidris alpina</i> ) [A149]
	Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> ) [A156]
	Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> ) [A157]
	Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> ) [A160]
	Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ) [A162]
	Greenshank ( <i>Tringa nebularia</i> ) [A164]
Black-headed Gull ( <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ) [A179]	
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
Glenomra Wood SAC	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]
Ratty River Cave SAC	Caves not open to the public [8310]
	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]
Danes Hole, Poulnalecka SAC	Caves not open to the public [8310]
	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]
	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]
Askeaton Fen Complex SAC	Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210]
	Alkaline fens [7230]
Kilkishen House SAC	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]