Report

*Wexford County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028*

# Appropriate Assessment Screening

For Wexford County Council

7 April 2025

# Document Control

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| **Prepared By:** | Owen Dudman and Charlotte Pigott |
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# Revision History

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3rd Floor St Augustine's Court, 1 St. Augustine's Place, Bristol, BS1 4UD Tel: +44(0)117 974 1086

24 Greville Street, Farringdon, London, EC1N 8SS Tel: +44(0)20 3873 4780

First Floor, Patten House, Moulders Lane, Warrington WA1 2BA Tel: +44(0)1925 937 195

8-9 Ship St, Brighton and Hove, Brighton BN1 1AD Tel: +44(0)20 3873 4780

Avenue du Port, 86c Box 204, 1000 Bruxelles Tel: +44(0)20 3873 4780

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared by Logika Consultants Ltd. on behalf of Noise Consultants for the Action Planning Authority (APA), Wexford County Council (hereafter referred to as 'WCC'), and provides Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the WCC Noise Action Plan (NAP) 2024 – 2028 dated 31st March 2025 (Ref: 16299A-20-R01-02-F02).

This document provides information relating to the NAP with respect to its potential for Likely Significant Effects upon Natura 2000 sites.

The requirement to prepare a NAP is set for members of the European Union under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC), a legal instrument for addressing adverse effects of environmental noise which have been transposed into Irish law[1] and require preparation of strategic noise mapping and implementation of NAPs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the national competent authority responsible for implementing the END and will ultimately report noise mapping and action planning to the European Commission. Under the Regulations, the APA is responsible for preparing a NAP for the County of Wexford. The entire administrative area within WCC is covered by the WCC NAP and is the focus of this AA Screening Report.

The purpose of the NAP is to provide a strategic overview of the management of noise issues and effects within Wexford County. The NAP aims to develop clear priorities based on detailed noise mapping results, with a view to prevent environmental noise where necessary; particularly where exposure to noise levels can induce harmful effects on human health. The NAP also identifies areas to preserve environmental acoustic quality where the baseline is favourable. The temporal framework for the NAP is 4 years, at which time the noise mapping and NAP will be reviewed, and where necessary revised. Further details are set out within **Section 4** of this report.

The AA process includes provisions for screening, scoping, and assessment, where relevant. The process of AA screening is required as part of the proposed NAP, to determine whether further assessment is required. Therefore, the overall purpose of this report is to establish whether AA should be carried out within Wexford County. The outcome of this screening is to determine whether significant negative environmental effects will arise from implementation of the NAP.

The report provides:

- The methodology used to define the scope of the assessment and identify potential effects on Natura 2000 sites associated with the NAP (Stage 1: screening);
- A list of the Natura 2000 sites and their designated features that may be subject to Likely Significant Effects due to the NAPs, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects; and,
- An assessment (to inform the competent authority's AA) of which Likely Significant Effects may result in an Adverse Effect on the Integrity (AEOI) of one or more Natura 2000 sites, taking in to account the type, timing and securing mechanisms for proposed mitigation.

[1] The END was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 20061 (S.I. 140/2006) (the "Regulations"). The Regulations were revised by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 20182 (S.I. 549/2018) and amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 20213 (S.I. 663/2021).

This AA Screening Report has been undertaken in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (DEHLG) guidance (2009)[2].

## 1.2 Legislative Context

The requirement for AA for plans and projects is outlined in European Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC (the 'Habitats directive' and the 'Birds directive', respectively), which are transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (S. I. No. 477 of 2011)), the 'Habitat Regulations'.

The overarching goal of the Habitats and Birds directives are to uphold or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species recognised as of European Community Interest. These specific habitats and species are outlined in the Habitats and Birds directives, with the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) aimed at safeguarding the most vulnerable among them. Together, these designations are commonly referred to as European Sites, also known as Natura 2000 sites.

In Ireland, the habitats and/or species which are the reason(s) for designation of an SAC are referred to as the 'Qualifying Interest(s)' (QI) of that site. In relation to SPAs, the bird species for which a particular site is designated are referred to as the 'Special Conservation Interests' (SCI).

The Nature 2000 network in Ireland is made up of European sites which include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC); and
- Proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA).

Under article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but would be likely to have a Likely Significant Effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an AA. Plans or projects can only be authorised if it can be concluded that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the Nature 2000 site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The exception to this is where there are Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and there are no other feasible alternatives, which would not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. In this case the Competent Authority must assess all compensatory measures required to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network.

In fulfilling its role as a Competent Authority, WCC is required to apply the precautionary principle to Natura 2000 sites and can only grant adoption once it has been ascertained that the proposed NAP will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. The word 'likely' is regarded as a description of a risk (or possibility) rather than in a sense an expression of probability.

[2] Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) guidance (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.

# 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

AA is a systematic process designed to determine whether a plan or project will have any effects or likely environmental significance.

The AA process can involve up to four stages:

- **Stage One: Screening:** The process that 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: AA:** 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. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, then the process may end at this stage. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage Three.
- **Stage Three:** Assessment of Alternative Solutions: The process that examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoids 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.

Regulation 42 of the Habitats Regulations requires the competent authority to undertake Stage 1 Screening for AA and where necessary Stage 2 AA of any plan or project. Stage 3 and 4 are included under Regulations 43 and 45 respectively.

A Likely Significant Effect is, in this context, any appreciable effect that may reasonably be predicted as a consequence of a plan or project that may affect the conservation objectives of the features for which the site was designated but excluding trivial or inconsequential effects.

## 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening assessment is being undertaken concurrently with the AA process to determine whether the European Union (EU) Directive 2001/42/EC7 (the 'SEA Directive') and European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations S.I.435/2004[3] as amended 2011, apply to the NAP, and if further SEA beyond formal screening is required.

This AA Screening report has informed the SEA Screening process as this AA Screening does not indicate that there are likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of the NAP, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. On this basis there is no automatic trigger for the requirement of SEA for the plan.

[3] S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (irishstatutebook.ie)

# 3 AA Screening Methodology

## 3.1 Overview

Guidance on the screening stage has been provided by the Government[4], who describe it as a preliminary assessment to check if a proposal:

- is directly connected with or necessary for the conservation management of a Natura 2000 site;
- is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site on its own or in combination with other proposals.

The screening process has two potential conclusions, namely that a project or plan, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could result in:

- No Likely Significant Effects on any of the Qualifying Interest (QI)/ Special Conservation Interest (SCI) of the Natura 2000 site; or
- Likely Significant Effects are identified, or cannot be ruled out, on one or more of the QI/SCI of the Natura 2000 site.

Only the second of these outcomes will trigger an AA. If one or more Likely Significant Effects are identified, or cannot be ruled out, it is then necessary to proceed to Stage 2 and undertake an AA.

### 3.1.1 Baseline Data Collection

A desk-based assessment of the Wexford County Council NAP was undertaken, focussing on its potential to have effects on habitats and species that are listed as QIs (for SACs) and SCIs (for SPAs) in the designations for the European sites.

### 3.1.2 Legislation and Guidance

This AA Screening Report has been prepared taking into account aforementioned legislation and guidance including the following:

#### *Legislation*

- Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora;
- Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, codified version;
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended;
- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended; and
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

#### *Guidance*

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010, including Appendix 5; AA Checklist);

[4] Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (npws.ie)

- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission Environment DG, 2002;
- Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission 2018;
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive. Findings of an international workshop on Appropriate Assessment in Oxford, December 2009;
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission, 2000; and
- OPR Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, March 2021.

### *Other Sources*

- Environmental Protection Agency ENVision maps and water data — www.epa.ie;
- Format for a Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 (DAHG, 2014) www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/PAF-IE-2014.pdf;
- Ireland's Article 1.2 submission to the EU Commission on the Status and Trends of Bird Species (2008-2012);
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 (DAHG, 2017);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service — Article 17 Status of EU protected habitats in Ireland reporting (NPWS 2013a & 2013b);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service online European Site information — www.npws.ie; and,
- The state of nature in the European Union Report on the status and trends in 2013 - 2018 of species and habitat types protected by the Birds and Habitats Directives.

The AA has been undertaken in consideration of European Union (CJEU) judgment on Case C323/17 (People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta); "*it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects [mitigation] of the plan or project on that site*."

Other caselaw relevant to Screening are Waddenzee (C127/02), Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála (C461/17) and Court of Appeal case C1/2009/0041/QBACF Citation No [2009] EWCA Civ. 1061.

# 4 Stage 1: Screening

## 4.1 Description of the Plan: Wexford County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

### 4.1.1 Background of the Plan/Overview

Once adopted the WCC NAP will replace the current NAP 2019-2023. The NAP seeks to provide a framework for long-term management of environmental noise from transport systems referring to the results of the strategic noise maps to inform assessments of population exposure and harmful effects of noise. As part of this management, the protection of quiet areas in open country within Wexford County is also set out within the NAP.

As there is no provision in legislation upon which the actions outlined in the NAP can be enforced, as set out in the NAP's Noise Policy Statement and Responsible Aims reliance will be made on various other plans and policies such as the Wexford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028, the National Planning Framework 2040, and the Planning Acts, for their implementation. The NAP also provides the basis for feedback and input from statutory authorities and the public to help inform the NAP in relation to the assessment and management of environmental noise.

### 4.1.2 Scope of the NAP

The scope of the NAPs include the identification of existing noise emissions, priority important areas based on an assessment of harmful effects and details of noise management measures for consideration and evaluation at implementation stage.

### 4.1.3 Noise Policy Statement

The Noise Policy Statement for the Wexford County is detailed as follows:

*"Wexford County Council will adopt a strategic approach to managing environmental noise from major roads with the following overarching policy principles:*

- ***Prevention** – manage the risk of additional members of the community being exposed to undesirable noise levels where it is likely to have significant adverse impact on health and quality of life.*
- ***Protection** - protect areas which are desirably quiet, or which offer a sense of tranquillity through a process of identification and validation followed by formal designation of 'Quiet Areas in open country'.*
- ***Mitigation** – identify, and prioritise, appropriate mitigation measures to reduce noise levels where they are potentially harmful."*

### 4.1.4 Responsible Aims

The Responsible Aims that underpin the Noise Policy Statement and are set out within the NAP, are as follows:

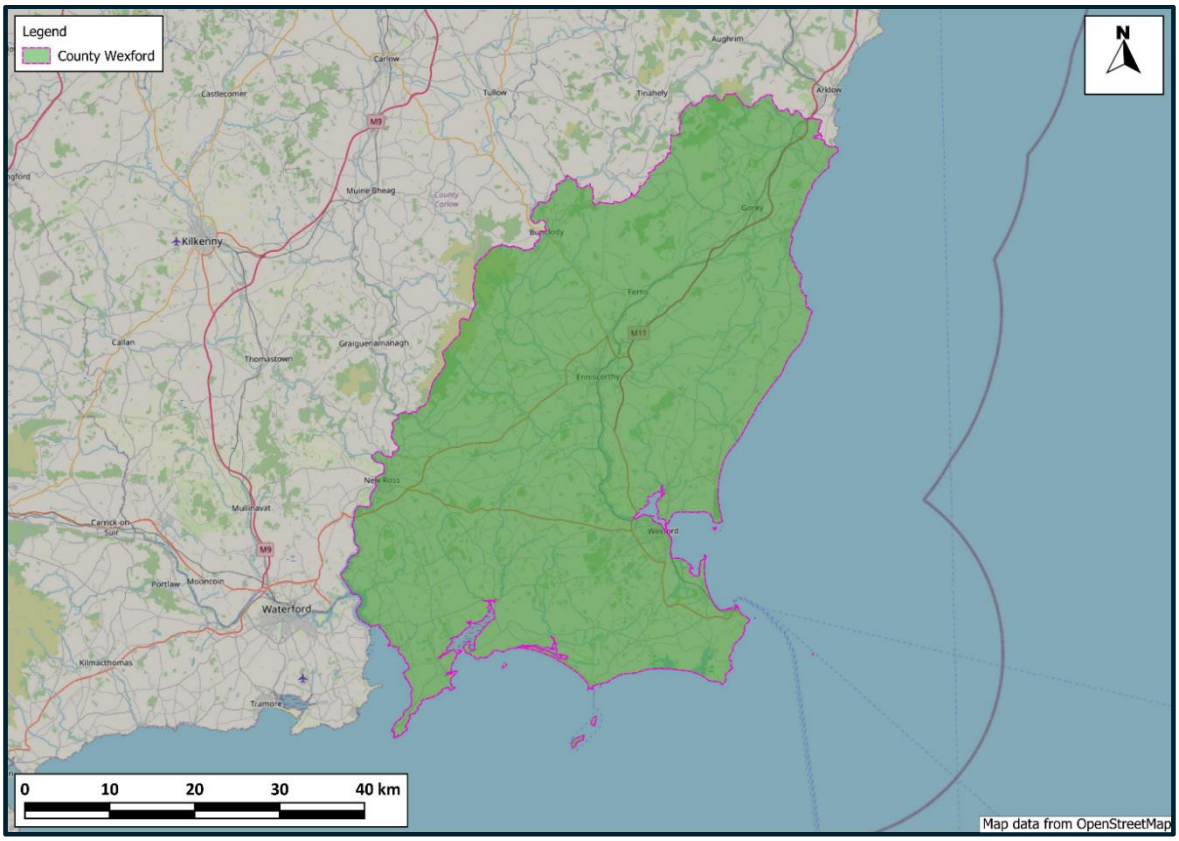
- ***"RA_1 - Policy and Guidance Development** – Encourage the integration of noise considerations into the ongoing process of policy and guidance development, and actively promote existing policies and guidance related to noise.*

- ***RA_2 - Working Groups*** *– Participate in technical working groups pertinent to the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive and with the assistance of the Environmental Protection Agency, a Round 4 Noise Action Plan Implementation Working Group shall be established.*
- ***RA_3 - Noise Mitigation*** *– In collaboration and consultation with relevant Noise Mapping Bodies, noise management interventions shall be applied on a priority basis during existing maintenance and improvement programs, where appropriate. This application will be based on a relevant evaluation of whole-life costs and benefits.*
- ***RA_4 - Protection*** *– Assess and, where appropriate, propose Candidate Quiet Areas to the Environmental Protection Agency for designation as Quiet Areas in open country by the Minister.*
- ***RA_5 - Prevention*** *– Evaluate and condition planning proposals for noise sensitive development near major noise sources.*
- ***RA_6 - Community Engagement*** *– Commit to proactive and inclusive engagement with communities and collaboratively address noise issues for the improvement of our shared living environment.*
- ***RA_7 - Manage Noise Complaints*** *– Review and respond to all environmental noise complaints in accordance with their Customer Charter.*
- ***RA_8 - Regulatory Engagement*** *– Report the progress on the implementation of Noise Action Plans, including the investigation and implementation of noise management measures in Priority Important Areas, and the assessment of Candidate Quiet Areas in open country for preservation of environmental noise quality, to the Environmental Protection Agency on an annual basis."*

### 4.1.5 Description of Wexford County

Wexford County covers an area of approximately 1,454km$^2$, as shown in **Figure 4-1**. As detailed in the NAP, the total population of the Wexford County is approximately 163,919. In terms of noise sources, there are approximately 111km of major road. There are no major railways or aircraft sources. There are also a total of 16 noise sensitive buildings (13 schools and 3 hospitals) located within Wexford County.

**Figure 4-1: Wexford County Boundary**




## 4.2 Identification of Relevant Natura 2000 sites

### 4.2.1 Natura 2000 sites

A total of 12 SPAs and 20 SACs have been identified, as shown on **Figure 4-2** and **Figure 4-3** within or adjacent to Wexford County, or within the likely zone of impact which have been considered within this AA. In this instance the likely zone of impact is 15km from the Wexford County boundary in accordance with Government guidance.

Further details on Natura 2000 sites identified are provided in **Table 4.1**, including the Site Code, location (County) and QI/SCI.

**Figure 4-2: SPA Sites within Wexford County**

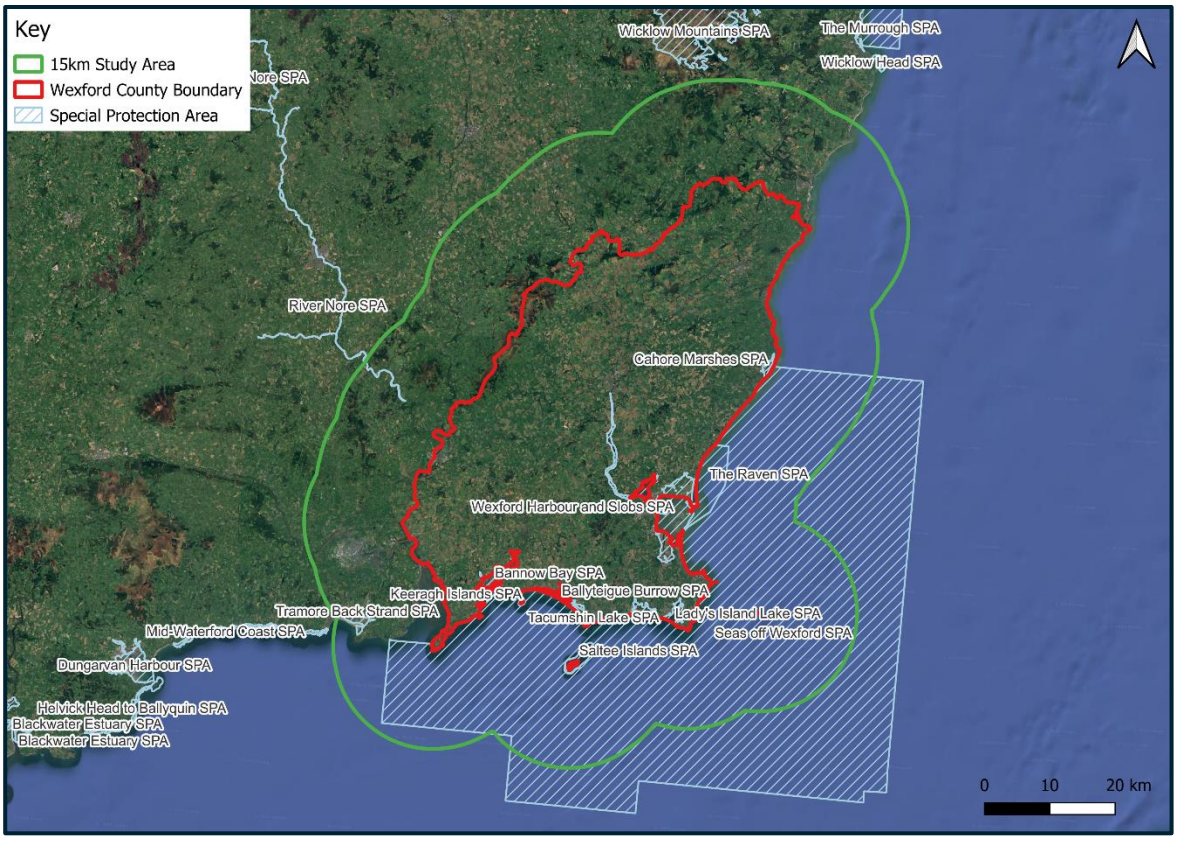


**Figure 4-3: SAC Sites within Wexford County**

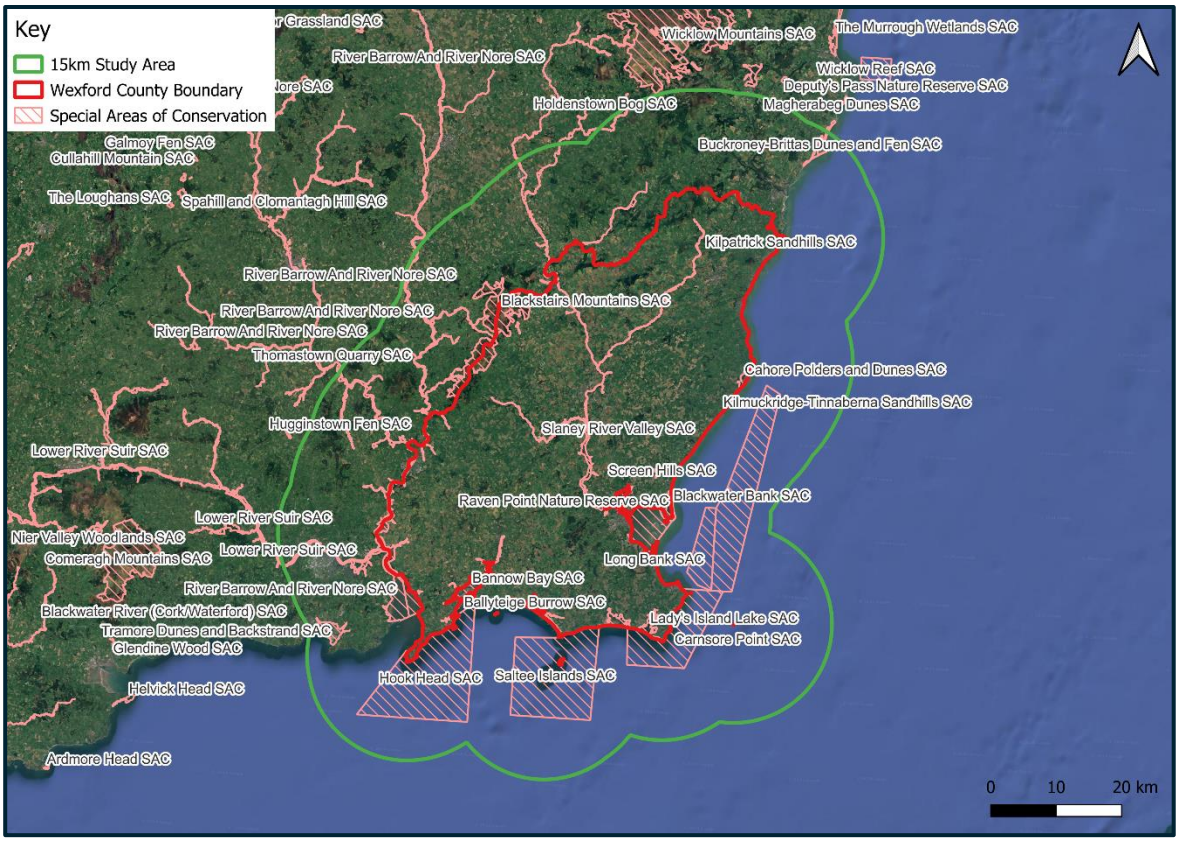



**Table 4-1: Natura 2000 sites**

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| Saltee Islands SPA | 4002 | Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009]<br>Gannet (Morus bassanus) [A016]<br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018]<br>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]<br>Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]<br>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188]<br>Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199]<br>Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]<br>Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204] |
| Lady's Island Lake SPA | 4009 | Gadwall (Anas strepera) [A051]<br>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191]<br>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]<br>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| The Raven SPA | 4019 | Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]<br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144]<br>Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Ballyteigue Burrow SPA | 4020 | Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]<br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Tramore Back Strand SPA | 4027 | Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]<br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Bannow Bay SPA | 4033 | Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]<br>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]<br>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143]<br>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]<br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA | 4076 | Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004]<br>Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) [A005]<br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]<br>Bewick's Swan (Cygnus columbianus bewickii) [A037]<br>Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038]<br>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br>Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048]<br>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]<br>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]<br>Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053]<br>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]<br>Scaup (Aythya marila) [A062]<br>Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067]<br>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]<br>Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]<br>Coot (Fulica atra) [A125] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143]<br>Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144]<br>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]<br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]<br>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]<br>Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195]<br>Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Tacumshin Lake SPA | 4092 | Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004]<br>Bewick's Swan (Cygnus columbianus bewickii) [A037]<br>Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038]<br>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]<br>Gadwall (Anas strepera) [A051]<br>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]<br>Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054]<br>Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056]<br>Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]<br>Coot (Fulica atra) [A125]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| Keeragh Islands SPA | 4118 | Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] |
| Cahore Marshes SPA | 4143 | Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] |
| River Nore SPA | 4233 | Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) [A229] |
| Seas off Wexford SPA | 4237 | Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]<br>Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009]<br>Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013]<br>Gannet (Morus bassanus) [A016]<br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018]<br>Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]<br>Mediterranean Gull (Larus melanocephalus) [A176]<br>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183]<br>Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]<br>Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191]<br>Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192]<br>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br>Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]<br>Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195]<br>Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199]<br>Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200]<br>Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204] |
| Lower River Suir SAC | 2137 | Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]<br>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]<br>Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles [91J0]<br>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br>Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]<br>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]<br>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]<br>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]<br>Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]<br>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] |
| River Barrow And River Nore SAC | 2162 | Estuaries [1130]<br>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br>European dry heaths [4030]<br>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]<br>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]<br>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]<br>Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]<br>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]<br>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]<br>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]<br>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]<br>Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]<br>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br>Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421] |
| Long Bank SAC | 2161 | Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] |
| Carnsore Point SAC | 2269 | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] |
| Blackwater Bank SAC | 2953 | Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]<br>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] |
| Hook Head SAC | 764 | Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]<br>Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]<br>Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] |
| Lady's Island Lake SAC | 704 | Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] |
| Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC | 1741 | Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] |
| Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC | 671 | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] |
| Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC | 1742 | Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br>Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150] |
| Bannow Bay SAC | 697 | Estuaries [1130]<br>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (Sarcocornetea fruticosi) [1420]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] |
| Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC | 700 | Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br>Humid dune slacks [2190] |
| Tacumshin Lake SAC | 709 | Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] |
| Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC | 710 | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br>Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae) [2170]<br>Humid dune slacks [2190] |
| Blackstairs Mountains SAC | 770 | Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]<br>European dry heaths [4030] |
| Screen Hills SAC | 708 | Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]<br>European dry heaths [4030] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| Saltee Islands SAC | 707 | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]<br>Submerged or partially submerged sea caves [8330]<br>Halichoerus grypus (Grey Seal) [1364] |
| Ballyteige Burrow SAC | 696 | Estuaries [1130]<br>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (Sarcocornetea fruticosi) [1420]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br>Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150]<br>Humid dune slacks [2190] |
| Buckroney-Brittas Dunes and Fen SAC | 729 | Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120]<br>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br>Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150]<br>Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae) [2170]<br>Humid dune slacks [2190]<br>Alkaline fens [7230] |
| Slaney River Valley SAC | 781 | Estuaries [1130]<br>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] |

| Natura 2000 Site | Site Code | Qualifying Interests / Species of Conservation Importance |
|---|---|---|
| | | Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]<br>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]<br>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]<br>Alosa fallax fallax (Twaite Shad) [1103]<br>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br>Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365] |

## 4.3 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

A Screening Matrix is presented in **Table 4-2** based on the guidance provided in "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC".

**Table 4-2: Screening Matrix**

| Screening Matrix | Overview |
|---|---|
| Description of the Plan | An overview of the NAP, including background and context are provided in **Section 4** of this document. |
| Identification of Natura 2000 sites | Natura 2000 sites identified within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the NAP are provided in **Section 4.1** of this document. |
| Is the plan directly connected with, or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site(s)? | The Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management objectives of the above listed Natura 2000 sites in **Section 4.1** and therefore further consideration of Likely Significant Effects is required. |
| What are the individual elements of the plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site? | Noise is a principal source of disturbance for QI and SCI features of Natura 2000 sites.<br><br>The aim of the NAP is to reduce noise sources within WCC and protect 'Quiet Areas in open country', whereby existing baseline noise levels will be maintained, or reduced.<br><br>If Quiet Areas in open country are designated, they will not offset noise elsewhere that might affect Natura 2000 sites, and it is likely that many of the Quiet Areas in open country will also coincide with the Natura 2000 sites. For other identified sites, there are no policies or requirements that would directly offset noise elsewhere that could give rise to Likely Significant Effects to Natura 2000 sites, or the QI/SCI of that site.<br><br>Therefore, there is no pathway for potential Likely Significant Effects as the plan does not propose any measures which could increase or negatively affect existing noise levels. The reduction in noise in areas near to, or within Natura 2000 sites will ultimately contribute to a beneficial effect of Natura 2000 sites and their QI/SCI features. |

| Screening Matrix | Overview |
|---|---|
| | The potential noise impacts that arise from future development works will be assessed in their own right through Planning and Licensing processes, including through Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, Appropriate Assessments and application of relevant Guidance relating to noise. |
| What are the likely effects on the Natura 2000 sites in view of the specific conservation objectives set out for the designating features? | None – the NAP does not provide a specific framework for development; they provide a strategy to reduce noise emissions and identify quiet areas in open country where either baseline noise emissions will be protected, therefore there is no pathway for potential Likely Significant Effects on Natura 2000 sites in view of their conservation objectives. |
| Describe how the project or plan (alone or in-combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site(s). | The effects of the NAPs are considered to be beneficial, however no pathway for Likely Significant Effects is identified. |
| Explain why these effects are not considered to be significant. | The proposals in the NAP will ultimately seek to reduce noise emission levels of road traffic, rail traffic and at industrial activity sites, including ports. The reduction in noise at these locations across WCC will ultimately result in the reduction or retention of baseline noise emissions within and adjacent to Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, there is no pathway for adverse effect and so it cannot be significant. The reduction in noise emissions will be indirectly beneficial for species associated with Natura 2000 sites albeit not significantly, as it is well documented that noise can have detrimental effects on a species ability to reproduce (timing, frequency and hatching success) and communicate[5]. It is acknowledged that some species may be habituated to current noise levels, and it is considered that their function within the Natura 2000 sites would only be improved by reduced noise levels. |
| Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site? | The following other Plans have been considered:<br>• Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028;<br>• Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region;<br>• Wexford Local Transport Study<br>• And Wexford City and County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2024 – 2029.<br>The NAP present a framework for the identification and reduction of potential noise sources and the identification or proposed 'Quiet Areas in open country'. There are no additional sources for effects to Natura 2000 sites in combination with other projects or plans. |

## 4.4 Screening Statement

The NAP is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site.

[5] Masayuki., S *et al* (2020) Sensory pollutants alter bird phenology and fitness across a continent. Nature.

The NAP establishes a framework for identifying and mitigating noise pollution sources within WCC. Any project resulting from the NAP must adhere to relevant levels within the National Planning Framework, such as the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028, along with other applicable legislation and policy requirements.

The potential noise impact of development is overseen through the Planning and Licensing processes, encompassing Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, Appropriate Assessments and adherence to pertinent guidance on noise.

The primary trigger for AA would be if the NAP was likely to significantly affect a Natura 2000 site. However, the NAP elements are not identified as having any direct or indirect impacts on Natura 2000 sites. The actions contained within the NAP do not constitute a source of impact to any identified Natura 2000 site.

Stage 1 Screening has concluded that the NAP and its associated actions is not predicted, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to have Likely Significant Effects upon the 32 Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 4.2.

Therefore, in alignment with the Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, it is determined that the NAP will generate no potential for Likely Significant Effects. Consequently, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

The statement as above is still valid following consultation responses to the NAP and associated SEA and AA screenings. Should there be further changes to the NAP, which may affect the conclusions presented herein, then a further screening of the potential for Likely Significant Effects upon Natura 2000 sites will be required.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