

## HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT FOR PHASE 2 GROUND INVESTIGATION WORKS – N24 CAHIR TO LIMERICK JUNCTION PROJECT

This report is informed by and should be read in conjunction with the **Appropriate Assessment Screening Report** carried out by **Scott Cawley** for **ARUP** on behalf of **Tipperary County Council** as amended by **Addendum No. 1** received on the **22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021** and **Addendum No. 2** received **11<sup>th</sup> November 2021**.

(A) DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND LOCAL SITE:			
<b>Site location:</b>	<p>All of the sites identified for Ground Investigation (GI) Works are located within the N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction Study Area which is circa 5km wide and extends from Cahir to west of Oola. Appendix IV of the Screening Report includes a location map showing each of the GI locations. Revised location maps were received on the 23rd July 2021 illustrating the GI locations relative to the Lower River Suir Special Area of Conservation (SAC) boundary.</p> <p>Addendum No. 1 includes for revised locations for the following GI works;</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P2-BH01</li> <li>• P2-BH08</li> <li>• P2-BH09</li> <li>• P2-BH14</li> <li>• P2-BH16</li> <li>• P2-BH18</li> <li>• P2-BH22</li> <li>• P2-BH23</li> <li>• P2-BH24</li> <li>• P2-BH27</li> <li>• P2-TP05</li> <li>• P2-TP06</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P2-TP07</li> <li>• P2-TP13</li> <li>• P2-TP17</li> <li>• P2-TP24</li> <li>• P2-TP29</li> <li>• P2-DP008</li> <li>• P2-DP009</li> <li>• P2-DP010</li> <li>• P2-DP011</li> <li>• P2-DP015</li> <li>• P2-DP016</li> <li>• P2-DP031</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>P2-BH13 has been omitted.</p> <p>The revised locations for the above-mentioned GI works are documented within drawings 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000136 to 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000158, are enclosed as Appendix I to Addendum No. 1.</p> <p>Addendum No. 2 includes for additional GI works locations as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P2-BH27 Option A (See 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000154 in Appendix II)</li> <li>• P2-BH27 Option B (See 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000154 in Appendix II)</li> <li>• P2-DP022 Option A (See 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000152 in Appendix II)</li> <li>• P2-TP20 Option A (See 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000152 in Appendix II)</li> </ul> <p>The locations of the GI works across the scheme are provided in Appendix I and Appendix II to Addendum No. 2.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P2-BH01</li> <li>• P2-BH08</li> <li>• P2-BH09</li> <li>• P2-BH14</li> <li>• P2-BH16</li> <li>• P2-BH18</li> <li>• P2-BH22</li> <li>• P2-BH23</li> <li>• P2-BH24</li> <li>• P2-BH27</li> <li>• P2-TP05</li> <li>• P2-TP06</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P2-TP07</li> <li>• P2-TP13</li> <li>• P2-TP17</li> <li>• P2-TP24</li> <li>• P2-TP29</li> <li>• P2-DP008</li> <li>• P2-DP009</li> <li>• P2-DP010</li> <li>• P2-DP011</li> <li>• P2-DP015</li> <li>• P2-DP016</li> <li>• P2-DP031</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Proposed development:</b></p>	<p>Ground Investigation Works comprising a combined geotechnical, geo-environmental and hydrological investigation, as Part of Phase 2 for the N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction Project. Detailed list of works set out under Section 3.1 of the Screening Report prepared by Scott Cawley on behalf of Tipperary County Council. The list can be summarised as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22<sup>1</sup> cable percussive boreholes (min distance of 20m from surface water feature),</li> <li>• 6 no. rotary coreholes (min distance of 20m from surface water feature),</li> <li>• 32<sup>2</sup> no. dynamic probes (min distance of 10m from a surface water feature),</li> <li>• 30<sup>3</sup> No trial pits to a maximum depth of 4.5m (min distance of 10m from a surface water feature)</li> </ul> <p>The indicative location of the GI Work areas is shown on Drawings 272687-ARUP-02-OS-DR-YEGEO-000031 to 000089.</p> <p>The purpose of the Ground Investigation Works is to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine depth of potential soft ground areas,</li> <li>• Classify the gravel strata and determine if they area water bearing,</li> <li>• Establish the soil stratigraphic profile and strength of soils,</li> <li>• Determine the depth to bedrock and bedrock topography</li> <li>• Characterise the bedrock lithologies and strength</li> <li>• Establish reusability of soil and rock</li> <li>• Determine the depth to groundwater, direction of groundwater flow, static groundwater levels and water quality</li> <li>• Establish if there is groundwater contamination south of Gortdrum mine</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is the application accompanied by EIS</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>(B) IDENTIFICATION OF THE RELEVANT NATURA 2000 SITE(S):</b></p>	
<p><b>Natura 2000 site(s) within 15km and distance to same:</b></p>	<p><b>Within the study area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower River Suir SAC 002137</li> </ul> <p><b>Within 15km of the study area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower River Shannon SAC 002165 (c 700m north of the study area and 800m downstream)</li> <li>• River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162 (c 19km south east of the study area, 59km downstream)</li> <li>• Galtee Mountains SAC 000646 (c1km south west of the syudy area)</li> <li>• Moanour Mountain SAC 002257 (c 4km west of the study area)</li> <li>• Glen Bog SAC 001430 (c13km west of the study area)</li> <li>• Philipston March SAC 001847 (c2km north of the study area)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> 21 no. under initial Screening Report. 1 no. borehole omitted under Addendum No. 1 and 2 no. added under Addendum No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 31 no under initial Screening Report. 1 no. additional DP included under Addendum No. 2

<sup>3</sup> 29 no. under initial Screening Report. 1 no. additional TP included under Addendum No. 2

<b>Sites within the zone of influence:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anglesey Road SAC – 002125 (11.5 km north of the study area)</li> <li>• Clare Glen SAC 000930 (c 15km west of the study area)</li> <li>• Slivefelim to Silvermines Mts SPA 004165 (7.5km north of the study area)</li>   <li>• Lower River Suir SAC 002137</li> <li>• Lower River Shannon SAC 002165</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation objectives/qualifying interests of the site and the factors that contributes to the conservation value of the site: (which are taken from the Natura 2000 site synopses and, if applicable, a Conservation Management Plan: (all available at <a href="http://www.npws.ie">www.npws.ie</a>) (ATTACH INFO if necessary)</b>	<p>Qualifying Interests are as set out in Appendix I of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Scott Cawley on behalf of Tipperary County Council (attached).</p>
<b>Key Environmental conditions to support site integrity.</b>	<p>Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity are as set out in Appendix I of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Scott Cawley on behalf of Tipperary County Council (attached).</p>

<b>(C) POSSIBLE IMPACTS ARISING FROM THE PROJECT:</b>	
<b>Consider the potential for direct impacts on habitats</b> <i>Consider proposed developments within 200m of the SAC/SPA</i>	<b>Y/N and Comment</b>
1.1	<p>Could the proposed project give rise to direct loss of habitats for which the SAC/SPA is designated, or other habitats occurring within the SAC/SPA?</p> <p>One GI location (BHC4380) is located within the Lower River Suir SAC. BHC4380 is an existing borehole that will be accessed by foot for the duration of the works for groundwater monitoring. No re drilling is required as part of the works. The borehole is stated to be located in improved agricultural grassland and is accessed over unpaved tracks across improved agricultural grassland. No Annex 1 EU Habitats were observed at the location of the borehole or on the access route to same during surveys undertaken in April/May 2021. Having regard to the above it is considered that the proposal will not give rise to any direct loss of habitats.</p> <p>I note that the following GI locations are in close proximity to but outside of the SAC site boundary;</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borehole P2-BH-14,</li> <li>• Borehole P2-BH22,</li> <li>• Trial pit P2-PP21</li> <li>• Borehole P2-BH20,</li> <li>• P2-DP027, and,</li> <li>• P2-DP023</li> </ul>
1.2	<p>Could the proposed project give rise to increased human usage/access to the site, which could potentially cause deterioration of certain habitat types eg woodlands, wetlands or riverbanks. Consider proposals for development of a large scale within 1km of sensitive woodlands eg large scale residential development or hotels. Consider proposals for the development of paths or cycleways along the river.</p>	<p>No. One GI location (BHC4380) is located within the Lower River Suir SAC. BHC4380 is an existing borehole that will be accessed by foot for the duration of the works for groundwater monitoring. No redrilling is required as part of the works. The borehole is stated to be located in improved agricultural grassland and is accessed over unpaved tracks across improved agricultural grassland. No Annex 1 EU Habitats were observed at the location of the borehole or on the access route to same during surveys undertaken in April/May 2021. Having regard to the above it is considered that the proposal will not give rise to any direct loss of habitats.</p> <p>The Ground Investigation Works are not located within any areas where invasive species are known to be present, and as works do not include tracking machinery or plant through any European site, there is no possibility of the proposed works undermining the conservation objectives of the qualifying interests as a result of accidentally spreading or introducing invasive species.</p>
1.3	<p>Does the proposed project involve development of drainage systems? If yes, could this cause drying out of wetland or woodland habitats within the SAC/SPA?</p>	<p>No. Owing to the scale of works and the temporary nature of same it is considered that the proposal will not result in the drawdown of the groundwater table.</p>
<p><b>Consider the potential for impacts on water quality within the SAC/SPA</b>  <i>Consider all proposed developments within the catchment of the SAC/SPA</i></p>		<p><b>Y/N and Comment</b></p>
2.1	<p>Are there any rivers, streams or drains connecting the proposed development site and the SAC/SPA? If yes, consider whether there is potential for construction related impacts on water quality.</p>	<p>There are no rivers, drains or streams directly connecting the Ground Investigation sites to any Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>However, surface water run off and discharges from the proposed works will drain to the existing local surface water drainage network. The potential zone of influence of potential effects on water quality from the proposed works could extend downstream of the study area, via the local surface water network. There are no foul waters associated with the proposed ground water investigation works.</p>

		<p>There is a possibility of construction-related run off, including sediments and hydrocarbons, entering the surface water network and thereafter, travelling downstream, there is no possibility of any perceptible effects on water quality in the River Shannon or River Suir or their tributaries, for the following reasons;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small scale of the proposed works relative to the receiving surface water network,</li> <li>• Short duration of the proposed works, 2 days at each location and 7 week overall.</li> <li>• Low volume of surface water run off</li> <li>• Low volume of fuel at the work site at any given time</li> <li>• Level of mixing, dilution and dispersion of any surface water run off/discharges from the proposed works in the receiving watercourses</li> </ul> <p>The site specific conservation objectives for the Lower River Suir for the freshwater pearl mussel, a species that is highly sensitive to changes in Water Quality, relate to the Clodiagh population of the species only. The Clodiagh River is not located downstream of the proposed works.</p> <p>Having regard to the above it is considered that the proposed works will not undermine the conservation objectives of any of the qualifying interests of downstream Natura 2000 sites by virtue of surface water run off or discharge.</p>
2.2	<p>Would the proposed project result in surface water or other discharges to rivers, streams or drains directly connected to the SAC/SPA? If yes, consider whether the discharges could give rise to increased eutrophication or other pollution risk within the cSAC/SPA. Consider whether increased surface water discharge could give rise to increased risk of downstream storm water surges.</p>	<p>There are no rivers, drains or streams directly connecting the Ground Investigation sites to any Natura 2000 sites. However, surface water run off and discharges from the proposed works will drain to the existing local surface water drainage network. The potential zone of influence of potential effects on water quality from the proposed works could extend downstream of the study area, via the local surface water network. There are no foul waters associated with the proposed ground water investigation works.</p> <p>There is a possibility of construction-related run off, including sediments and hydrocarbons, entering the surface water network and thereafter, travelling downstream, there is no possibility of any perceptible effects on water quality in the River Shannon or River Suir or their tributaries, for he following reasons;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small scale of the proposed works relative to the receiving surface water network,</li> </ul>

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2.3	Would the proposed project require an industrial waste water discharge license? If yes, consider the potential impacts of the discharge on water quality in the SAC/SPA.	<b>No</b>
2.4	Is the proposed project located within a flood zone? If yes, consider whether there is potential for construction or operational related impacts on water quality in the SAC/SPA; consider whether the proposed project increases flood risk elsewhere in the catchment and particularly the cSAC/SPA; or increases the risk of stormwater surges downstream.	Works will not be undertaken in any areas under flood (Appendix III of Screening Report).
2.5	Are the proposals for waste water treatment in compliance with EPA requirements?	N/A
2.6	Could the proposed project contribute to cumulative negative impacts on water quality? Consider the current status of the freshwater system (see <a href="http://www.wfdireland.ie">www.wfdireland.ie</a> ).	Given the scale of the catchments there is potential for cumulative effects on water quality arising from other projects carried out within the Lower River Shannon and Lower River Suir catchments. Any development proposals in the catchment must comply with the relevant Development Plan which will contain policies and objectives to protect water quality. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal will not result in cumulative negative impacts on water quality.
2.7	Would the proposed project involve dredging (construction or ongoing maintenance related)?	<b>No</b>

Consider potential for impact on species		Y/N and Comment
<i>Freshwater Pearl Mussel</i>		
3.1	Protection of this species will be achieved by the protection of water quality (see section 2 above), by the protection of river habitats (see section 1 above), and by the maintenance of free passage for fish.	The site specific conservation objectives for the Lower River Suir for the freshwater pearl mussel, a species that is highly sensitive to changes in Water Quality, relate to the Clodiagh population of the species only. The Clodiagh River is not located downstream of the proposed works. The proposal will not have a negative impact in water quality or river habitat not will it interfere with the free passage of fish.
<i>Freshwater Crayfish</i>		
3.2	Protection of this species will be achieved by the protection of river habitats (see section 1 above).	The proposal will not have a negative impact in water quality or river habitat not will it interfere with the free passage of fish.
<i>Fish species including Salmon, Lamprey spp. and Twaite Shad</i>		
3.3	Protection of these species will be achieved by the protection of water quality (see section 2 above), by the protection of river habitats (see section 1 above), and by the maintenance of free passage for fish.	The proposal will not have a negative impact in water quality or river habitat not will it interfere with the free passage of fish.
<i>Otter</i>		
3.4	Would the proposed project result in any interference with river banks within the SAC/SPA?	No. In a number of cases (PH-BH 22, PT-BH 20, BHC4380, P2-TP25, P2-DP027 and P2-BH26) works are within 150m of the Lower River Suir but are outside of the SAC boundary.
3.5	Would the proposed project result in increased levels of disturbance to the habitat of the Otter?	Construction related disturbance and displacement could potentially occur within the vicinity of the works. Disturbance effects would not be likely to extend beyond 150 sq m. Owing to the limited timescale of the works there is no potential for the brief disturbances to result in long term effects on the habitat.
<i>Bats</i>		
3.6	Would the proposed project involve the removal of trees, hedgerow or woodland?	No
3.7	Does the proposed project involve the repointing of old bridges or the restoration or demolition of old buildings or other structures?	No

<b>D) NPWS ADVICE:</b>	
Summary of advice received from NPWS:	As per Section 2.4 of the AA Screening Report

<b>(E) SCREENING CONCLUSION:</b>			
Screening concludes that: (Tick [ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ] the appropriate box A, B or C)			
A) Appropriate Assessment is not required because the project is directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the site.			
B) No potential for significant effects therefore Appropriate Assessment is not required.			X
C) Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain. (In this situation seek a Natura Impact Statement under Section 177T(5) of the Act from the applicant or reject the project. Reject if too potentially damaging or inappropriate.)			
Name:	Caroline Conway		
Position:	Senior Executive Planner	Date:	02.12.2021